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Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

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Mantikê

Studies in Ancient Divination

Edited by

Sarah Iles Johnston and Peter T. Struck



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This series Religions in the Graeco-Roman World presents a forum for studies in the social and cultural function of religions in the Greek and the Roman world, dealing with pagan religions both in their own right and in their interaction with and influence on Christianity and Judaism during a lengthy period of fundamental change. Special attention will be given to the religious history of regions and cities which illustrate the practical workings of these processes. Enquiries regarding the submission of works for publication in the series may be directed to Professor H.S. Versnel, Herenweg 88, 2361 EV Warmond, The Netherlands, h.s.versnel@hetnet.nl.

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INTRODUCTION: DIVINING DIVINATION

SARAH ILES JOHNSTON

In 1974, in an introduction to a collection of essays titled *Divination et rationalité*, Jean-Pierre Vernant offered two sets of questions to those who would study the topic:¹

What, on one hand, can be implied about the nature of the intellectual operations that take place during the stages of an oracular consultation ... what type of rationality is expressed in the game of divinatory procedure, the apparatus of oracular techniques and symbolisms, and the classificatory frameworks used by the seer to sort out, organize, manipulate and interpret the information on which his competence is based? On the other hand, what position and function does a particular society assign to oracular knowledge? Because prophetic science is practiced on occasions when a choice, or important choices, need to be made and because it determines decisions, both public and private, how far does its field of application extend and what are the areas of social life subject to its authority? Where on these levels are we to situate the relations of the seer to other figures such as the king, priest and judge, who, in their roles, also have a power of decision?

The two focuses proposed by these questions might be defined as the *intellectual* and the *social*. In articulating them, Vernant was (as he himself noted) following the lead of scholars who had studied divination among African peoples.² Understandably so, for it was by these scholars that the most interesting methodological advances in the study of divination had been forged during the twentieth century. Classicists, following the publication of Auguste Bouché-Leclercq's

¹ The introduction was titled "Parole et signes muets;" the volume appeared in Paris. Vernant's introductory essay appeared in English as "Speech and Mute Signs" in *Mortals and Immortals*, a collection of English translations of some of Vernant's essays, edited by Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton 1991), 303-317. Zeitlin was the translator of this particular essay and the quotation given above is found on page 303.

² Vernant cites A. Adler and A. Zempleni, *Le baton de l'aveugle: Divination, maladie, et pouvoir chez les Moundang du Tchad* (Paris 1973); E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford 1937); G. Park, "Divination and Its Social Contexts," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 93 (1963): 195-209, (rpt. in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach* 2nd ed., ed. W. Lessa and E. Vogt [New York, Evanston, and London 1965], 381-92); V.W. Turner, *The Drums of Affliction* (Oxford 1963) and Max Gluckman, ed., *The Allocation of Responsibility* (Manchester 1972).

massive *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité* in the late nineteenth century,³ had had little to say about divination, and what they had said was largely of a documentary nature: they had concentrated on collecting information about specific practices or oracular sites.⁴ As valuable as such collections are, the theoretical and methodological advances that had been made in the study of religions by 1974 made it highly desirable to go further, to begin examining ancient divination in its social contexts and using it as a lens through which to view the mentalities of the cultures that engaged in it.

The four classicists who contributed to Vernant's volume (Roland Crahay, Luc Brisson, Jeannie Carlier and Denise Grodzynski) certainly heeded his call, but relatively few others have done so during the past three decades. In spite of an upsurge of work on ancient religion in general, not much has been said about divination. What has appeared

³ Paris 1879-82, rpt. Bruxelles 1963. A shorter, but still important and often overlooked discussion of ancient divination from about the same period can be found in Jacob Burkhardt, *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*, volume 2, under the title "Die Erkundung der Zukunft." The first edition of this work was published 1898-1902 but the lectures from which the essays were drawn date to the 1870s. (I thank Walter Burkert for bringing Burkhardt's work on divination to my attention.) Chronologically, the next major work on divination was W.R. Halliday's *Greek Divination* (London 1913), which surveys our information concerning the major methods and offers some analysis that draws on the contemporary cultural anthropological approaches of the Cambridge Ritualists.

⁴ E.g., P. Amandry, *La mantique apollonienne à Delphes* (Paris 1950); J. Fontenrose, *Delphi: Its Responses and Operations with a Catalogue of Responses* (Berkeley 1978); R. Bloch, *Les prodiges dans l'antiquité classique: Grèce, Etrurie et Rome* (Paris 1963); L. Crahay, *La littérature oraculaire chez Hérodote* (Paris 1956); D. Del Corno, ed., *Graecorum de re oniro-critica reliquiae*. Testi e Documenti per lo Studio dell'Antichità 26 (Milan 1969); W. Günther, *Das Orakel von Didyma in hellenistischer Zeit* (Tübingen 1971); H.W. Parke, *Greek Oracles* (London 1967); Idem, *The Oracles of Zeus: Dodona, Olympia, Ammon* (Oxford 1967); Idem, *Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London and Sydney 1985); Idem, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (London and New York 1988); H.W. Parke and D.E.W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, 2 vols. (Oxford 1956); G. Roux, *Delphes: son oracle et ses dieux* (Paris 1946). In this vein as well belongs the excellent commentary on the first book of Cicero's *De divinatione* by Arthur Stanley Pease (Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 6 [Urbana, Ill., 1920]); see now also the translation and commentary by Gérard Freyburger and John Scheid (Paris 1992). Another recent—and valuable—example of collecting evidence on divination is represented by Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (London and New York 1994); Barton surveys our information and reads it against its historical background. Also of interest is the catalogue to an exhibition at the Museum Rietberg in Zürich in 1999, *Orakel: Der Blick in die Zukunft*, which includes not only marvelous photographs of objects connected with divination from around the world but essays by specialists on the topic.

often has, happily, engaged with questions or utilized approaches such as those that Vernant advocated.⁵ For example, Lisa Maurizio (1995) investigated the values that ancient Greece ascribed to both women and possessed prophecy by contextualizing the Pythia within our information about female possession in other cultures, including those of contemporary Africa.⁶ Robert Parker's examination of the Delphic Oracle (1985) took up the question of oracular authority and suggested that the interpretive process that followed an oracle's delivery often transferred authority from the god who had spoken the oracle to those who received his words.⁷ David Potter (1994) studied how divination was used during the Roman Imperial period to empower actors in

⁵ Although the number of publications of this kind has been relatively small during the past thirty years, there still are more than can be discussed in the body of this Introduction. Some other important contributions are: Mary Beard, "Cicero and divination: the formation of a Latin discourse," *JRS* 76 (1986): 33-46, which was paired with Malcolm Schofield, "Cicero for and against Divination," *JRS* 76 (1986): 47-65 (both Beard and Schofield were responded to by S. Timpanaro, *Nuovi Contributi di Filologia e Storia della Lingua Latina*, Testi e manuali per l'insegnamento universitario del latino 38 [Bologne 1994], 257-64); J.-G. Heintz, ed., *Oracles et prophéties dans l'antiquité*. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 15-17 juin 1995 (Paris 1997), see especially the essays by C. Traunecker, F.M. Fales and G.B. Lanfranchi, J. J. M. Roberts and J. Champeaux; Veit Rosenberger, *Griechische Orakel: Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Darmstadt 2001); and M. Sordi, ed., *La Profezia nel Mondo Antico*. Scienze Storiche 53 (Milan 1993). A series of publications by Charles Guittard and Dominique Briquel on Etruscan divination both assemble our evidence for it and address the question of how far we can rely on the evidence of Roman authors: C. Guittard, ed., *La divination dans le monde étrusco-italique*, Actes de la Table ronde Paris 1986, 3 vols., Caesarodunum 52.56 (Paris 1986); C. Guittard and D. Briquel, eds., *Les écrivains du siècle d'Auguste et l'Etrusca Disciplina*, Caesarodunum, Supplément 61 (Tours 1991); eadem, eds., *Les écrivains du siècle d'Auguste et l'Etrusca Disciplina II*, Caesarodunum, Supplément 63 (Tours 1993); eadem, eds., *Les écrivains et l'Etrusca Disciplina de Claude à Trajan*, Caesarodunum, Supplément 64 (Tours 1995); eadem, eds., *Les écrivains du deuxième siècle et l'Etrusca Disciplina*, Caesarodunum, Supplément 66 (Tours 1996).

⁶ "Anthropology and Spirit Possession: A Reconsideration of the Pythia's Role at Delphi," *JHS* 115 (1995): 69-86. See also her "Delphic Oracles as Oral Performances: Authenticity and Historical Evidence," *CA* 16.2 (1997): 308-34, and on the Pythia cf. G. Sissa, *Le corps virginal* (Paris 1987), English trans. *Greek Virginity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990). Two other scholars who, like Maurizio, have studied Greek divination within the context of divination in other cultures are W. Geoffrey Arnott, "Nechnung: A Modern Parallel to the Delphic Oracle?" *Greece and Rome*, 2nd ser. 36 (1989): 152-57 and C. R. Whittaker, "The Delphic Oracle: Belief and Behavior in Ancient Greece—and Africa" *HThR* 57 (1965): 21-47.

⁷ "Greek States and Greek Oracles," in *Crux: Essays Presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix on his 75th Birthday, History of Political Thought* 6. 1-2, eds. P.A. Cartledge and F.D. Harvey (1985), 298-326 (rpt. in R. Buxton ed., *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* [Oxford 2000], 76-108).

the civic and political arenas; in particular, Potter examined the way in which emperors and would-be emperors manipulated their subjects through the pronouncement of prophecies.⁸ Giovanni Manetti (1987) used semiotic theory to approach ancient Greek and Mesopotamian divinatory systems, and in doing so demonstrated that very different divinatory mentalities underlay the two cultures, which in turn reflected the importance of written and oral methods of communication in each of them.⁹ In the early 1990s, Polymnia Athanassiadi contributed a series of articles that showed how changes within divinatory practices during late antiquity could be used to help trace larger shifts in religious and civic authority and to pinpoint the areas in which pagan and Christian ideologies clashed.¹⁰ An edited volume brought out by Federica Cordano and Cristiano Grottanelli (2000) focused on sortition in the ancient world—a topic that had particularly been neglected; several of the essays, most notably Grottanelli's, showed how close examination of a divinatory method illuminates the manner in which abstract concepts such as "equality" are understood by a culture.¹¹ Dream divination stands out as having attracted particular attention. To single out only two of a number of works on this topic, Patricia Cox Miller (1994) examined the way in which dreams and their interpreta-

⁸ *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994). See also Potter's *Prophecy and history in the crisis of the Roman Empire: a historical commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle* (Oxford 1990).

⁹ *Le Teorie del Segno nell' Antichità Classica* (Milan 1987), English trans. by Christine Richardson as *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis 1993).

¹⁰ "The Fate of Oracles in Late Antiquity: Didyma and Delphi," *Δελτίον Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας* n.s. 15 (1989-90): 271-78; "Philosophers and Oracles: Shifts of Authority in Late Paganism," *Byzantion* 62 (1992): 45-62; "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *JRS* 83 (1993): 115-30. Several chapters of Robin Lane Fox's *Pagans and Christians* (New York 1987) also discuss late antique divination, as does Marie Theres Fögen, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager: Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der Spätantike* (Frankfurt am Main 1997). Miller's work on dreams (cited below, n. 12) also focuses almost exclusively on late antiquity.

¹¹ The volume was *Sorteggio Pubblico e Cleromanzia dall' Antichità all' Età Moderna* (Milan 2000); Grottanelli's contribution was "La cléromancie ancienne et le dieu Hermès," 155-96. See also my "Lost in the Shuffle: Roman Sortition and its Discontents," *ARG* 5 (2003): 146-56. Divinatory sortition at Roman oracular sites was studied by J. Champeaux, *Fortuna: Recherches sur le culte de la Fortune à Rome et dans le monde romain des origines à la mort de César*, 2 vols, Collection de l'École Française de Rome, vol. 64, n. 1 and 2 (Rome 1982/87); "Les oracles de l'Italie antique: Hellénisme et Italicité," *Kernos* 3 (1990): 103-11; "Sors oraculi: Les oracles en Italie sous la république et l'empire," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: Antiquité* 102 (1990): 271-302.

tion provided a discourse through which both personal and societal patterns of thought could be articulated,¹² and William Harris (2003) surveyed Roman perceptions of dreams and how they changed over time, in the course of which he identified the social circumstances in which claims of dreams' veracity were likeliest to be made.¹³ In marked contrast to the fairly healthy amount of recent work on dream divination, however, work on divination within the context of magic has scarcely begun—a surprising circumstance, given the huge amount of interest in all other aspects of ancient magic during the past three decades or so. In 1947, Samson Eitrem had addressed the subject in his *Orakel und Mysierien am Ausgang der Antike*, but for fifty years afterward the topic lay almost dormant, until Fritz Graf (1999) took it up again in "Magic and Divination," which served as the first annual Eitrem Lecture sponsored by the Norwegian Institute in Athens.¹⁴

This last and most egregious demonstration of the relative neglect

¹² *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton 1994). Miller has published a number of other studies on dreams as well: "A Dubious Twilight: Reflections on Dreams in Patristic Literature," *Church History* 55 (1986): 153-64; "All the Words Were Frightful: Salvation by Dreams in the Shepherd of Hermas," *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988): 327-38; and "Reimagining the Self in Dreams," *Continuum* 1 (1991): 35-53.

¹³ "Roman Opinions about the Truthfulness of Dreams," *JRS* 93 (2003): 18-34. On dreams see also Christine Walde, *Die Traumdarstellungen in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung* (Munich 2001); Simon Price, "The future of dreams: from Freud to Artemidorus," *Past and Present* 113 (1986): 3-37; R.G.A. van Lieshout, *Greeks on Dreams* (Utrecht 1980); D. Shulman and G.G. Stroumsa, eds., *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (New York and Oxford 1999); the excellent bibliography in Walde can take the reader further as well.

¹⁴ Graf's lecture was delivered in Athens in 1997 and published two years later in David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen, eds., *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4-8 May 1997* (Bergen 1999), 283-98. Eitrem's book appeared in the series *Albae Vigiliae*, edited by Karl Kerényi. In between, Dirk Obbink translated and published a small portion of Eitrem's *Magie und Mantik der Griechen und Römer*, which had been left unpublished at the time of Eitrem's death in 1966; Obbink's contribution appeared under the title "Dreams and Divination in the Magical Papyri" in C. Faraone and D. Obbink, *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford and New York 1991), 175-86. My own "Charming Children: the Use of the Child in Ancient Divination," *Arethusa* 34.1 (2001): 97-118 also studies divination in the context of magic. In the present volume, Christopher Faraone takes up this topic and it is touched upon, as well, by Frankfurter. Of course, one of the founding fathers of the study of magic—Theodor Hopfner—had much earlier contributed his two-volume *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber: Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde* 21 (1921) and 23 (1924), which, as the title implies, had much to say on the topic of magic and divination.

of divination prompts a series of observations that may help to clarify why divination was generally neglected. In 1941, the first volume of Martin P. Nilsson's *Geschichte der griechischen Religion (Bis zur griechischen Weltherrschaft)* appeared. This volume exhibits little interest in divination—with the exception of a chapter on Delphi, there are only occasional, passing references to it—and virtually no interest in magic. One is led to conclude that for Nilsson and his readers, these phenomena were not central to religion. The second volume (*Die hellenistische und römische Zeit*), which Nilsson published nearly ten years later, shows somewhat greater interest in these topics (including two chapters that discuss astrology) but not as much as one would expect, given that Nilsson and his contemporaries believed the Imperial Age to be the time when such things flourished. Again, the implicit message seems to be that such matters were of tangential relevance to a survey on religion.¹⁵ It remained for Eitrem, who had long demonstrated an attraction to such topics, to treat divination in a smaller, lesser-known book whose publication fell between Nilsson's two volumes and to treat magic in many of his articles.¹⁶ We continue to hope that a manuscript that unites the two, which was destined to appear as volume three of the "Handbuch" series but which Eitrem left unpublished at his death in 1966 (*Magie und Mantik der Griechen und Römer*), will someday appear as well.

But although these observations help to explain why neither magic nor divination initially profited from the increasing interest in ancient religion that the twentieth century witnessed, they still leave us with the question of why it was magic, and not divination, that was finally taken up when the tide began to turn in the 1970s. Two further observations suggest themselves. The first is inspired by the title of

¹⁵ Nilsson did publish an article on the Greek magical papyri in between the two volumes, in 1947: "Die Religion in den griechischen Zauberpapyri," *Bull. Soc. Roy. Lund.* 48 (1947): 59-93. On the separation of religion from magic and divination, and on the pairing of magic and divination in antiquity as well as in scholarship of the twentieth century, see further Graf's comments in the article cited in n. 14.

¹⁶ See Knut Kleve, "Samson Eitrem—on the threshold of antiquity," in David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen, eds., *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4-8 May 1997* (Bergen 1999), 13-20; Fritz Graf, "Samson Eitrem," in C. Faraone and D. Obbink, *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York and Oxford 1991), 175-76; and Leiv Amundsen, "Eitrem-Bibliography," *SO* 43 (1968): 110-23. (As Kleve shows, even Eitrem "did not completely avoid the prejudices of his time" regarding magic.)

Vernant's collection of essays—although I do not mean to imply that its editor would necessarily endorse it. Vernant's pairing of divination and rationality brings to mind a difference between magic and divination, at least as they appeared to earlier scholars. Namely, whereas magic was almost always viewed by scholars and non-scholars alike as dark and irrational—as the ultimate foil to religion in a Frazerian or Tylorian sense—it was hard to characterize divination in the same way. Certainly, divination partakes of beliefs that some people would describe as irrational. Some might even claim that the very expectation of obtaining extraordinary knowledge, which lies at the core of all divination, makes it irrational. Divination also includes practices that some would define as irrational because they work by methods that are empirically unverifiable. Lecanomancy (scrying), haruspicina and astrology are among these.

And yet, because scholars knew quite well that many civic and religious institutions of the Greeks and Romans incorporated divinatory practices, and because many of these institutions had long been admired for their “rational” accomplishments (for example, the Roman senate undertook no action without first consulting the augurs, and Cleisthenes' reform of the Athenian system of citizenship sought approval from Delphic Apollo), it was difficult to put divination into the same category as magic.¹⁷ It was also impossible to separate divination from admirable Greek and Roman figures, including Themistocles, Plato, Plutarch and a whole line of Roman nobles—to say nothing of Apollo, that Nietzschean epitome of rationality and clarity. In other words, when earlier scholars constructed a spectrum stretching from “religion” to “magic,” divination tended to fall further towards the “magic” end of the spectrum but it was never placed at the bitter end; it is somewhat of a *tertium quid*. Everyday life could be taken to bear out divination's relative acceptability as well: as Walter Burkert notes in this volume, during World War II, women scrutinized their coffee grounds to learn the fates of their distant sons and husbands, and newspaper horoscopes have long been popular.

Situating divination between religion and magic had certain consequences. It almost surely made divination a less appealing schol-

¹⁷ More recent scholarship has, of course, taught us that plenty of prominent figures of Greek and Roman antiquity used magic in both their personal and civic lives, too.

arly topic than magic during the 1960s and 1970s precisely because divination was perceived to be further away than magic from the unrefined (and thereby, or so the argument ran, the most deeply revealing) desires and beliefs of the ancients. And although the success of E.R. Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951) was an early harbinger and stimulus for classicists' growing fascination with such topics,¹⁸ the definitive turn towards them was driven by much larger forces. As the Western world grew more aware of rapidly-disappearing non-Western cultures, and more aware of its own colonialist effects on those cultures, scholars from many disciplines began to interrogate the ways in which Westerners had portrayed non-Western societies. They became more sensitive to the tendency to impose "otherness" upon outsiders, and also to the fact that this tendency existed among the outsiders themselves; it was a nearly universal human trait. Such realizations in turn challenged the normative assumptions underlying both our own categories and those of other peoples. In this atmosphere, magic stood out as a prime candidate for reexamination, for no other category had so often been used, transhistorically and cross-culturally, as a way of distancing outsiders.¹⁹ In contrast, the practice of divina-

¹⁸ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951). Notably, Dodds' book is also one of the few works of the time to examine divination, especially dream divination, in any detail, but these sections of the book had less effect on subsequent scholarship than the overall message that underlay the book as a whole: namely that the darker areas of the Greek mentality should be examined. This message was underscored by Dodd's subsequent publications, some of which took up divination, notably *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge 1965) and "Supernormal Phenomena in Classical Antiquity," in idem, *The Ancient Concept of Progress and Other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief* (Oxford 1973), 156-210. The latter first appeared in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychological Research* 55 (1971) and incorporates an essay published in *Greek Poetry and Life: Essays Presented to Gilbert Murray*, Cyril Bailey, E.A. Barber, C.M. Bowra, J.D. Denniston, D.L. Page, eds. (Oxford 1936).

¹⁹ Among the many works that took up the problem of defining magic (both the practice and the term) at about this time, see, e.g., H. Geertz and K. Thomas, "An Anthropology of Religion and Magic," *Jnl. Interdisc. Hist.* 6.1 (1975): 71-109; D. Hammond, "Magic: A Problem in Semantics," *American Anthropologist* 72 (1970): 1349-56; S. J. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3 (1968): 175-208; idem, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View," in *Modes of Thought*, ed. R. Horton and R. Finnegan (London 1973), 199-229; and M. Wax and R. Wax, "The Notion of Magic," *Current Anthropology* 4 (1963): 495-513; M. Winkelmann, "Magic: A Theoretical Reassessment," *Current Anthropology* 23.1 (1982): 37-66. The 1950 reissue of M. Mauss' 1902 "Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie," in *Sociologie et anthropologie* and even more importantly, its translation into English (*A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain [London and Boston 1972]), also stimulated thought in

tion had never acquired the same dangerously exotic stamp as had magical practices and the term “divination” had never acquired the same pejorative overtones that prompted attempts to redefine “magic.” In sum, one reason that divination may have failed to become a focus of scholarly interest in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was that it wasn’t as dark a target as magic.

My second observation follows upon the first. Although sociologists and anthropologists began to develop globalizing theories of magic (and critiques of the same) in the 1960s, anthropological work on divination tended instead to focus on the specifics of particular peoples’ systems.²⁰ Where theories were offered, they seldom took center stage (instead, focus lay on the data being examined) and scholars seldom claimed that such theories had broad applicability. Thus, even if scholars of antiquity had wished to take a new look at divination, well-developed theories through which they could do so were not easily available.

this area. The history of work on magic is further treated in the course of Hans G. Kippenberg, “Zur Kontroverse über das Verstehen fremden Denkens,” which serves as the introduction to *Magie: Die Sozialwissenschaftliche Kontroverse über das Verstehen fremden Denkens*, eds. Hans G. Kippenberg and Brigitte Luchesi (Frankfurt am Main 1978), 9-51; and H. S. Versnel’s “Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion,” *Numen* 38.2 (1991): 177-97.

²⁰ One might assume that E. E. Evans-Pritchard’s immensely popular *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (above, n. 2) would have had a significant influence on the study of divination in other cultures. To some extent this is true—all students of divination know about the Azande poison and termite oracles as Evans-Pritchard described them, and we have learned much about the sociology of knowledge from his discussions of these oracles. Yet the book’s greatest effect, as far as theoretical contributions, has been on the study of magic and witchcraft—as witnessed, for example, by Mary Douglas’ edited volume, *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London and New York 1970), which was offered as a tribute to Evans-Pritchard and which has, in turn, itself been influential on the study of magic. When scholars of ancient divination cite external theoretical models, they tend to stick to the same three or four in addition to Evans-Pritchard: George K. Park, as cited above in n. 2; William Bascom, *Ifa Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa* (Bloomington, Ind., and London 1969); and, of more recent date, Emily Ahern, *Chinese Ritual and Politics* (Cambridge 1981) and Philip M. Peek, ed., *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing* (Bloomington, Ind., and Indianapolis 1991). Oddly, Victor Turner’s work on divination, including *The Drums of Affliction* (cited in n. 2 above), *Ndembu Divination: Its Symbolism and Techniques* (Manchester 1961) and *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca 1975), seems not to be taken up by scholars of ancient divination, in spite of the widespread use of Turner’s theories more generally. On African divination see also now Alisa LaGamma, *Art and Oracle: African Art and Rituals of Divination* (New York 2000), which, although primarily an exhibition catalogue, includes a useful essay by John Pemberton III and extensive comments on each of the objects pictured.

Vernant had to go to some trouble to find his African models. And, although classicists pioneered theoretical work in the humanities during the 18th and 19th centuries (and particularly helped to pioneer work in religion at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries), they have seldom developed new theories since then. In this spirit it is worth remembering that work on ancient divination never ceased—as I noted above, valuable collections of material were assembled in the 1950s and 1960s. But it was a long time before scholars of antiquity moved on from assembly into evaluation.

With this in mind, we might look again at the work on divination that has more recently begun to appear, some of which was mentioned earlier in this essay. From where did these more theoretically sophisticated treatments of divination draw their inspiration and what finally prompted them? The most important answer to the first question is “Vernant”—most of the scholars whom I mentioned earlier cite his work in their notes; clearly the questions that he posed and the models that he and his contributors provided helped to stimulate these later works, just as they helped to stimulate contributions to the present volume. An answer to the second question is that much of the recent work that involves divination seems to address, at least as much as it addresses divination, other topics that have enjoyed increased attention in recent years: gender, semiotics, late antiquity, the construction of authority, religion as a social phenomenon. Was it through the back door that ancient divination finally entered the scene, in other words? Perhaps, but if so I make no complaint: whatever inspired them, it is in part thanks to these studies that divination now begins to pick up its own speed.

It is in response to them—and in the final analysis in response to the questions that Vernant posed thirty years ago—that the present volume is offered. Each of the nine contributors evaluates divination as a social practice, an intellectual construction or both, asking it to yield new insights into the ancient cultures from which it sprang as well as into its own methods and rationales.

Divination and Intellect

Whatever our ancient sources may claim about the greater powers that enabled it to work—gods, demons, the cosmos itself—divination is an utterly human art, behind which one can glimpse not only the rules that participants have developed for its engagement, but also the rules

by which participants assume (or hope) that the world works. Because its structures typically echo those that underlie related activities—such as communication among humans themselves—divination also helps us to understand the mentalities that organize other essential aspects of human existence.

On the most basic level, divination reflects the ways in which the Greeks and Romans constructed their world by the simple fact that divination exists. As both Burkert and I discuss in our essays, divination serves as a mediator or buffer between the human and the non-human realms, articulating the separation between them even as it attempts to bridge it. In this respect, divination plays the same role as does sacrifice, an act with which divination was inextricably bound together in antiquity, as Burkert notes (the internal organs of sacrificial animals were examined for clues about the gods' disposition; no divinatory consultation could take place at most institutional oracles without a preceding sacrifice; and Prometheus, the mythic founder of sacrifice was also the founder of many forms of divination). Together, sacrifice and divination delineate mortal existence even as they strive to reach beyond it.

The specific methods by which divination does so are examined by several contributors to this volume. Some follow Manetti in considering what might be called the semiotics of divination. As Burkert notes in his essay, all animals survive by virtue of their ability to read signs, but for humans, who possess a "wide and unspecific capacity of perception" the problem has always been "how to judge the relevance and meaning of particular signs, how to distinguish regular sequences from pure coincidence, how to sort out what is meaningful within the vague and poorly delimited sphere of concomitant perceptions." In other words, how to construct a divinatory system in which a signifier consistently points to its signified. The problem is not confronted by diviners alone—those engaged in medical or meteorological diagnoses must construct these systems as well—which brings us face to face with another question: in what sense did the ancients distinguish qualitatively between these systems of knowledge? What set divinatory systems apart from other systems that sought knowledge and clarification? Burkert suggests that for the Greeks and Romans, the defining characteristic of divinatory as opposed to other kinds of knowledge was, as the term "divination" implies, the participation of the divine. Diviners often were those who not only knew more but knew it through the experience of altered consciousness—ecstasy, possession, revelatory trance. In other

words, the semiotics of divination, unlike those of Hippocratic doctors, of farmers who predict the weather or of predators tracking prey, was not acquired through experience or study alone, but was bestowed by the very gods with whom they communicated.

Graf, in his treatment of the dice oracles from Imperial Asia Minor, touches on a further point. Building on the work of Umberto Eco, he notes that Greek and Roman divination usually constructs a narrator. At an institutionalized oracle such as Delphi, Claros, Didyma or Dodona, the identity of this narrator is clear: Apollo in the three first cases and Zeus in the last. This model of divination is quite different from one that we find in ancient Mesopotamia, for example, according to which the enquirer consulted a long list of occurrences and results, arranged in a protasis/apodosis fashion (“if a man dreams that someone gives him a seal—he will have a son”), and thereby arrived at a conclusion about what was going to happen without any clear feeling of having been in dialogue with a god, demon, or anyone else.

Graf’s dice oracles—and many similar forms of divination, including those examined in this volume by Grottanelli, William Klingshirn and David Frankfurter—at first appearance seem to fall closer to the Mesopotamian end of these two extremes insofar as the enquirer had no immediate contact with a god. In Graf’s cases, the enquirer instead rolled a set of five dice, used the resulting numbers to locate a series of verses on an inscribed tablet that stood nearby, and took his advice from those verses. The verses are, like the Mesopotamian apodoses, “oracles that precede the event” as Graf puts it and as such might be understood to exist in a state that is detached not only from immediate contact with the divine but also from the enquirer and his immediate concerns. Similarly, Klingshirn describes fifth-century CE enquirers as choosing numbers (perhaps by rolling dice) and looking up corresponding verses in a collection called the *Sortes Sangallenses*, and Frankfurter discusses a similar method of textual sortition practiced at the shrine of St. Colluthus in late antique Egypt.

And yet—to return to narratological analysis—some of these systems emphatically reinstate contact with the divine. As Graf shows, the first-person narrator of his dice oracles is clearly Apollo: signifier and signified still are linked to one another as in the Mesopotamian example, but the signified reverberates with the voice of a god. Moreover, another god is connected with each of the 54 combinations of dice throws that were possible: thus, if a consultant threw two sixes, two ones and a three, he was referred to “Isis the Savior” who in turn

referred him to the relevant verses, even if it was Apollo who “spoke” them. Graf initially suggests that we might understand Isis and the other gods to play double semiotic roles: simultaneously serving as the signifieds to which the signifying dice rolls point and the signifiers that themselves point to the signified verses. And yet there is a problem: the same god can be signified by more than one roll and in turn signify more than one set of verses. Upon closer examination, then, a neat, one-to-one semiotic approach seems to break down and Graf offers in its place an interpretation more familiar from other modes of religious experience: perhaps the association of particular gods with certain throws indicates that the particular god guided the enquirer’s hands as he made that throw.

In the case of Graf’s oracles, what started out as a semiotic system that we could tidily diagram admitted divine influence to the extent that tidiness began to dissolve under divinity’s weight; in Klingshirn’s *Sortes Sangallenses*, things develop differently, in spite of the system’s general similarity to that of the dice oracles. Although a narrator is constructed and often speaks directly to the enquirer (“I warn you not to harm your enemy, for he is nothing” says one verse), the voice behind the verses consistently *defers* to God in the third person, rather than *representing* itself as God (“God turns away your sufferings”). In fact, Klingshirn suggests, there are signs that many of the *Sortes*’ verses were openly composed by the diviners who used them, just as diviners among the Yoruba compose some of the verses used in Ifa divination. Personal divinity has not been excluded from the *Sortes*’ system, as in the Mesopotamian method of protasis/apodosis, but it has kept its distance. Would we be wrong to construct a spectrum of divinatory methods, at one end of which we placed models that distance divinity from the enquirer and at the other of which we placed those that privileged immediate contact with the divine? Probably—or at least we would have to concede that many systems fall in the middle of that spectrum, for example the dice oracle of Heracles Buraicus in Achaia (Paus. 7.25.10). But the opposition is worth keeping in mind nonetheless. Divinatory methods that relied on “oracles that precede the event” were a convenience for those who could not travel to Delphi or Didyma, and for us they can be semiotically satisfying, but the more directly the gods are imagined to be involved in the design of each divinatory message, the more closely they can be crafted to address the enquirer’s concerns, albeit cryptically at times, as the Pythia’s words illustrate. Moreover, as Burkert observes, to experience, or to

observe another person experiencing, altered consciousness provides direct testimony for additional dimensions of reality; such testimony carries uncommon weight and charisma.

Let us pause another moment on the phrase “oracles that precede the event” and on the intellectual gymnastics they require. Almost all forms of divination, but particularly those that rely on messages constructed in advance, must maintain semantic gaps that can be opened up towards the actual event. In the case of the dice oracles, free-lance interpreters were probably ready at hand to take advantage of these gaps, offering clarification of how “a bitch giving birth to blind puppies,” or some other obscure phrase was relevant to the consultant’s situation. Similarly, Frankfurter argues that the personnel at St. Colluthus’ shrine were involved in the interpretation of verses that enquirers received through sortition and Klingshirn suggests that diviners interviewed their clients even before the clients selected the numbers that would identify the applicable verses of the *Sortes Sangallenses*. The diviner and client then continued to discuss the situation in light of the answer given by the verses, with the diviner sometimes going so far as to refer the client to lawyers, doctors and other experts. The personal context in which these methods of divination took place was crucial to their usefulness, but this context in turn was built upon the nature of the systems themselves: had the systems provided no gaps, there would have been no room for interpretation, and thereby neither need nor opportunity for personal context.

Grottanelli examines two cases that push this observation to an extreme: the fraudulent use of verse sortition by priests of the Syrian Goddess, as described by Apuleius in the *Golden Ass*, and Aulus Gellius’ critique of an oracular response he found in a play by Plautus. In Apuleius’ story, the priests make their crooked living by means of a *sors unica*—a single lot with a single verse that could be interpreted to suit any occasion: “Yoke the ox, plough the land/High the golden grain will stand.” Whatever question the enquirer asked, this lot would obediently spring from the jar; if the enquirer asked whether he should marry, for example, “the answer was plain, he ought to take the yoke of matrimony and raise a fine crop of children.” The implicit protasis (the question asked by the enquirer) is endlessly variable and yet the apodosis (the response) is endlessly constant; the semiotic system has been bankrupted by its unscrupulous practitioners and yet the charismatic adeptness with which they were able to personalize the

context (to interpret the response to suit each case) enabled them to keep their secret well.

The oracular verses that Aulus Gellius ascribes to Plautus read “I shall die if I don’t do this; if I do this, I shall be flogged.” Here, the protasis/apodosis structure has been doubled, but nonetheless the enquirer is left on the horns of a dilemma, for both of the outcomes offered by the response are negative. Grottanelli suggests that Plautus was mocking, by means of exaggeration and inversion, real verses such as those that survive on some Roman *sortes* that are now housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale: “If you are wise, about uncertainty beware lest things become certain,” reads one and another says “Happily and spontaneously, ask for what you shall be given; you shall be forever happy.” Although not literally *sortes unicae* like the lot used by Apuleius’ priests, these responses similarly threaten to bankrupt their system by leaving infinite room for interpretative maneuvering; any single response would serve equally well for enquiries on marriage, commerce, agriculture, etcetera.

All means of sortition, including those examined by Graf, Klingshirn, Frankfurter and Grottanelli, rely on what scholars of divination call “randomization.” That is, participants insure that the lots or the dice are allowed to move freely, randomly, up to the moment that they give their answer by emerging from the jar that holds them (*sortes*) or coming to a stop on the table across which they roll (dice). Those who use such randomizing methods understand them to guarantee that no unscrupulous human can predetermine the outcome (a guarantee that Apuleius’ priests easily circumvented), that superhuman agencies can intervene and guide the objects, or both. In one way or another, all forms of divination partake of randomization—the altered state of consciousness enjoyed by the Pythia is a form of randomization, for example, insofar as it is understood to ensure that she is under neither her own control nor the control of any other human—but randomization is most clearly marked in methods that employ objects.

Yet our very use of the (modern) term randomization provokes a question, as Grottanelli brings out in his discussion. Did the ancients understand the concept of randomization in the same way as we, who are heirs to 17th-century mathematical theories of probability, understand it? One of Cicero’s criticisms of divinatory sortition suggests that some of them at least came close: “What, indeed, is a *sors*? It is more or less the same as playing *morra*, or dice or knucklebones: games that are totally based on daring and chance (*temeritas et casus*).”

But unlike Cicero, most people apparently could sustain cognitive dissonance regarding these matters. In some instances, such as at the divinatory cult of Fortuna at Praeneste, the gods were expected to involve themselves directly in the way that lots fell out. In other cases where dice or *sortes* were used—games, the selection of jurors and magistrates—divinity was assumed to have little or no affect upon the way things fell out; pure chance held sway instead.²¹

Sometimes the cognitive dissonance between the two views was ameliorated or elided. Although the speaker of Graf's dice oracles is Apollo, and the hand that guides the dice is apparently that of another divinity such as Isis, the entire procedure is overseen by yet another divinity: Hermes, under whose statue the dice were to be thrown. Hermes was an appropriate overseer of the process for two reasons: he was the patron of merchants, who were the oracles' primary clients, but he was also the god of chance, happenstance and accident, as Grottanelli has explored in depth in an earlier publication.²² Of course, Hermes' two interests go together; more than most other endeavors, ancient commerce was fraught with unpredictable turns of fate. Graf suggests that by making Hermes the overseer of Apollo's dice oracles, clients were trying to domesticate the unpredictable (we would say "random") forces that drove both their dice throws and their lives.

We began this section by using a semiotic model to look at certain forms of divination. Semiotics can also be applied to the study of ancient divination in quite a different manner: Peter Struck examines the way that divinatory semiotics were applied to other cognitive practices in antiquity, notably to the allegorical reading of poems by Orpheus, Homer and other poets. Both diviners and allegorists, notes Struck, are at heart interpreters. They assume that the texts they study are full of hidden meanings and set out to decode them, gleaning information that they then use to cope with, or to understand, the cosmos more effectively. Given this, it makes sense, Struck shows, that as allegoresis developed, its practitioners looked to divination for their models.

Thus, for example, the fourth-century BCE commentator of the Derveni Papyri approached a cosmogonic poem attributed to Orpheus with the assumption that Orpheus had hidden behind his divine myths information about how the cosmos worked. Orpheus had spoken

²¹ See Johnston and Grottanelli as cited in n. 11 above.

²² Grottanelli above n. 11 above.

enigmatically (*ainittesthai*) in order to protect that information from the common person, but the diligent and learned allegorist would be able to extract it, to interpret it. The parallel between divination and allegorical reading is underscored by shared vocabulary: “enigma” (*ainigma*) and its cognates are not, in general, words that we commonly encounter in ancient texts, but they appear frequently in allegorical texts such as the Derveni Papyrus and even more frequently in divinatory contexts. Indeed, to the ancient mind, oracles were literally enigmas or riddles to be solved, as more than one myth made clear. John Dillery, in his contribution to this volume, reminds us that the diviners Calchas and Mopsus competed in a contest of riddles (after which Calchas, the loser, died of grief). And implicit in many a Delphic pronouncement was a riddle waiting to be decoded at the risk of death or disgrace. Oedipus, in spite of his victory over the riddling Sphinx, discovered this the hard way when he misinterpreted the Pythia’s words, but Themistocles used his riddle-solving skills to save his city, arguing that the “Wooden Walls” that Delphi recommended to the Athenians for their protection were the walls of ships.²³

The allegorists decoded pre-existing texts; diviners, as we have already seen, did so as well when they encountered “oracles that precede the event” at dice oracles or in sortitional texts such as the *Sortes Sangallenses*. The method could also be applied to texts that had been created for quite different purposes. The *Sortes Vergilianae* and *Sortes Homericae* were famous examples of this practice, deriving their verses from the *Aeneid*, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. With these examples, however, we circle back again to the allegorists and their assumption that Vergil, Homer and other revered poets had filled their texts with hidden messages to begin with. The trick, as Struck demonstrates, was to extract those meanings. The allegorist and the sortitional diviner differed in some techniques, but their paths were not far apart.

Textuality presents us with another set of issues as well. As Dillery notes, “Writing introduces into the understanding of divine revelation an intermediary stage, separating the divinatory moment from its interpretation and application.” This was often the case when city-states sent envoys to Delphi: the response would be recorded and

²³ On divination and riddles, see also Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton 2004); Pietro Pucci, *Enigma, Segreto, Oracolo* (Rome 1996); and Manetti above, n. 9.

then presented to the assembled citizenry once the envoys were home again. It was at this point, in Athens, that Themistocles had gotten involved in the process. This sort of textualization looks largely like a matter of convenience and perhaps democracy: the entire citizen body cannot go to Delphi and so Delphi's response must be reliably conveyed to them.

But Dillery points as well to a more powerful tension lurking behind the textualization of oral divination, for although written texts arguably preserve a message more accurately over the long term, it is during the transition from oral to written that human intervention and thus corruption of divinatory messages is likeliest to occur. The *mantis* (a figure who pronounced divinatory messages) communicated the divine will instantly but the *chrêsmologos* (a figure who collected and subsequently re-interpreted old oracles) might intentionally or unintentionally alter his material. Such "anxiety about the reliability of an older communication newly performed" at least once led to a formal accusation of deliberate interpolation: The *chrêsmologos* Lasus charged that his colleague Onomacritus had added verses to the corpus of Musaeus' oracles. It also led, suggests Dillery, to the unparalleled and bizarre story of Epimenides' tattooed corpse: the body of this Cretan *mantis*, discovered after his death to be heavily inscribed, was preserved and closely guarded by the Spartans, apparently with the expectation that its messages, properly decoded, would eventually prove useful. This was a divinatory text that succeeded in preserving an oracular "voice" through the ages but that, unlike Musaeus' oracles, could never be attacked as a forgery.

Interestingly, neither the *Sortes Sangallenses* that Klingshirn discusses nor the verses used by Ifa diviners, to which Klingshirn compares the *Sortes*, even acknowledge such problems: both *corpora* were continually improved by the introduction of verses composed by those who used the *corpora* themselves. In these situations, we glimpse the expectation that divine inspiration is ongoing rather than frozen in the past—the categories of *mantis* and *chrêsmologos* (which were never completely separate even in classical Greece) have collapsed into one another. In the case of the Yoruba, this is facilitated by the fact that the corpus of verses is never written down in the first place; it is transmitted orally. In the case of Klingshirn's fifth-century CE Christians, we may be seeing yet another manifestation of a broader late antique desire to combine validation through reference to established texts with valida-

tion through constantly renewed revelation.²⁴ In either case, we are far from fifth-century BCE Greece, where tension between orality and scribality was high—not just in the divinatory arena but in general.

Divination within the Social Context

In the course of my earlier discussion, I several times began to pass from consideration of “intellectual” issues to “social” issues, for the ability to deliver or elucidate divinatory messages—as do *manteis*, *chrēsmologoi* and the experts who interpret sortitional verses—brings monetary rewards and, sometimes, social prestige. But there is a friction inherent in this role as well, which Dillery explores. In myth, the diviner is often of elite status (Teiresias descended from one of Thebes’ founding fathers), but his prophecies frequently set him against the ruling elite (Teiresias spars with both Oedipus and Creon). Diviner and ruler do not often work hand-in-hand (Epimenides’ cooperation with Solon being an exception to this rule) and when the two roles threaten to coincide, myth tends to separate them once again (according to Pindar, Melampus won a kingship through his divining abilities, but handed it over to his brother rather than becoming king himself).²⁵ Mythic seers, moreover, frequently find themselves in trouble: Theoclymenus was an outcast murderer, Polyphides an exile.

In reality rather than myth, Dillery shows, the divide is even more starkly marked: real diviners are never members of the elite, and they are under constant surveillance by the elite lest they practice deception out of self interest, as the story of Onomacritus’ expulsion by the ruling Pisistratids demonstrates. Diviners are frequently somewhat mobile members of society insofar as they are understood by nature to belong at its margins and yet may be called on to serve those firmly entrenched at its center. Apuleius’ story of the Syrian Goddess’s priests shows that it was not the elite alone whom diviners were assumed to cheat, however, and Christopher Faraone, in his contribution to this volume, suggests that many diviners were under constant surveillance not only because they might cheat but also because they might employ methods that met with official disapproval. Under these circumstances,

²⁴ I have explored this in Johnston, above n. 11.

²⁵ Other versions, which claim Melampus kept it for himself, were probably invented by the later Melampodids: see Jan N. Bremmer, “Melampus” in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition (1996), 952.

Faraone argues, diviners had to go underground, cloaking not only their activities but also their texts. Burkert notes that in many cultures and throughout history, diviners have been not merely under the surveillance of authorities but actively responsible for inciting rebellion against them. An oracle given by Dodona warned soldiers to be “on their guard against their leaders” during the battle of Chaironeia—advice that was sure to topple military discipline—and the last great revolt of Native Americans was headed by Tecumseh and his brother Lalawethika, who was a shaman.

Two further issues grow out of this image of the diviner as an outsider or even a rebel: the means by which diviners validated themselves and their art, and the place of diviners and divination in the imagination. The two overlap to some extent in Greece, for diviners frequently validated themselves by claiming descent from famous mythic diviners, as Dillery discusses—so with the Telliadae, the Clytidae, the Iamids and the Melampodidae for instance. Even here, however, diviners were on shaky ground, given the unfortunate histories of some of their mythic forefathers. Aligning oneself with an exile or murderer did not help one’s social standing even if it burnished one’s repute as a reliable diviner. The lesson seems to be that diviners, in choosing to be diviners, also chose between ensuring their social respectability and ensuring the charisma they needed to ply their art.

Things were different in late antique Egypt, as Frankfurter shows. Many forms of divination derived their authority from association with traditional, well-established centers of power, most notably temples, where priests might offer divinatory services to the populace in addition to roles they played within the temple cult itself. Frankfurter further suggests that in this venue divination itself held some degree of authority built on any of various expressions of tradition: the performative style of a diviner, for instance, or the identity of the god consulted. But whatever the specifics, it was through this link to tradition that divination simultaneously was able to adapt itself to changing conditions without losing its underlying authority and thereby to serve, in turn, as a means of maintaining cultural integrity. Egyptian diviners also seem to have felt freer to innovate, even to the point of purveying multiple divinatory techniques—sortition, mediumistic prophecy, incubation, ticket oracles—within a single temple complex (although, admittedly, our lacunose evidence for ancient divination may be skewing our picture here; there is evidence that sortition was practiced side-by-side with mediumistic prophecy at Delphi and if we knew more

about Greek institutional oracles, we might see a picture more similar to that of Frankfurter's Egypt). Frankfurter's analysis of divination at such shrines lends nuance to the paradigm of center and periphery that has long held sway amongst students of late antique religions. By drawing our attention to the variety of divinatory techniques that clustered at cult centers, Frankfurter demonstrates that religious energy always remained largely centripetal, rather than centrifugal; although independent practitioners might operate at the geographic margins, they played off the cult-centers to enhance their authority.

Returning now to divination's place in the imagination: Two essays in this collection, Faraone's and my own, take opposing sides on one aspect of this issue. Faraone suggests that necromancy—the invocation of the dead in order to obtain special knowledge—was practiced in Greece from the earliest periods, having been borrowed by the Greeks from their eastern neighbors, and that only during the Roman period did it subsequently fall into disfavor, and thence find it necessary to hide itself. This led to yet another form of divinatory encoding: any words in divinatory papyri that referred to the corpse one needed to perform necromancy were replaced with innocent substitutes. Thus, “skull” became “cup,” and Roman officials, skimming the rubrics of these papyri, were none the wiser about their true contents.

I argue, in contrast, that although the Greeks liked to entertain the idea of necromancy in their imaginations, in reality they shunned it, as they shunned most forms of contact with the dead. Instead, when communication between the living and the dead became necessary, they depended upon Delphic Apollo to mediate on their behalf. A significant percentage of our extant responses from the Delphic Oracle concern the dead. Typically, these responses instruct the living to establish cults that will appease the dead and thus put an end to problems that the dead are causing for the living—the Spartan's establishment of cult for the ghost of Pausanias, at the behest of Delphic Apollo, is a well-known example. As unpredictable as their gods might be, the Greeks preferred to interact with them rather than the dead. This stands in contrast to other ancient civilizations, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia, where interaction between the living and the dead was more direct.

In offering this analysis, I look toward one of the points mentioned earlier in this essay: divination often plays the role of a buffer, standing between the world as humans experience it on an everyday basis, and other worlds that threaten to impinge upon it in deleteri-

ous ways: the world of the dead, the world of the gods, the world of the past and the world of the future—this last of which includes the worlds of alternative, competing choices, whose ramifications cannot be seen until one irreversibly embarks upon them. Divination is not only (perhaps not even very frequently) a way of *solving* a particular problem in and of itself, but rather a way of *redirecting* the problem out of one of these other worlds and into the everyday world where one is better able to solve it with human skills—or as Burkert puts it, divination is a way of extending the realm of human *ratio* into areas that it cannot usually penetrate. Robert Parker has demonstrated this with reference to Themistocles and the “Wooden Walls” oracle. Once the Pythia had spoken Apollo’s words to the Athenians, Athenian energies were redirected toward publicly debating what those words *meant*—and civic debate was an exercise in which the Athenians were well practiced, an exercise in which they felt confident. Delphi, then, steered the Athenians out of perplexity and into a venue where they could apply their native talents.

Parker’s analysis deservedly has been well-received—a number of scholars, including several in this volume, have built upon it. Dillery adds a nuance, however, that others have missed. He notes that Plutarch, in his biography of Themistocles (chpt. 10), describes him as realizing that he could not win the Athenians over through human reason (*anthrôpinous logismois*) alone, and therefore set out to influence them through “divine signs and oracles (*sêmeia daimonia kai chrêsmous*), just as a poet introduces a *deus ex machina* into a tragedy.” Themistocles began by interpreting the disappearance of the sacred snake from its enclosure on the Acropolis as a sign of Athena’s abandonment of the city, and then presented his interpretation of the Wooden Walls oracle, eventually toppling an alternative interpretation offered by professional *chrêsmologoi*. Dillery suggests that Plutarch presents the scene not as (or at least, not only as) a demonstration of civic debate, but rather as a riddle competition similar to the mythic one between Calchas and Mopsus; victory went to him who could best decode Apollo’s words. Civic debate was a hallmark of Athenian democracy, but cultural expectations of how oracles worked, and how humans should respond to them, dictated the tenor of that debate.

The picture of this debate, especially as Dillery portrays it, reminds us of what scholars of African divination have demonstrated: that divination is often a social drama.²⁶ It accomplishes its work as much

²⁶ E.g., George K. Park, as cited in n. 2 above.

by *performing* an answer as it does by *providing* the answer itself. It also, as Frankfurter reiterates, has a capacity “to process—to criticize and legitimate—acts of social significance” by contextualizing them within a divine arena.

But in legitimating actions and decisions, divination also serves, for the scholar, as an indication of where legitimation is most necessary, and thereby where stresses—within a society, within a group, within a family or within the individual *psyche* of an enquirer—are strongest. Aelius Aristides provides such an exaggerated demonstration of this as to be almost ridiculous: the only sort of divine advice that this famous hypochondriac sought was that which could heal him. Many of the contributors to this volume touch on this issue in one way or another. Graf notes that enquirers at his dice oracles most frequently ask about business matters and only secondarily about marriage and personal affairs; Dillery speaks of increased consultation of oracles by city-states during times of war; I myself propose that tracking the answers Delphi gave to enquirers reveals an unusually high fear of the dead among the Greeks. Burkert’s connection of divination with social revolt makes the same point from a different angle: those who seek to overturn existing states of affairs buttress their decisions through divine voices. To borrow a metaphor from Peter Brown’s analysis of sorcery accusations in late antiquity, divinatory concerns are like “radio-active traces in an x-ray,” indicating in which areas the stresses in a community or individual lie.²⁷

This “social stress” approach to divination does not always work, however, in ancient cases where history leaves us only a partial picture of the environment in which divination took place. The *Sortes Astrampychi* that Frankfurter and Klingshirn touch upon, which may date to the first century CE, and the *Sortes Sangallenses* that are Klingshirn’s focus both present themselves as all-purpose problem-solvers, addressing enquiries on business, travel, how to deal with inimical people, health and conception, for instance. Given this variety, it is hard to use either set of *Sortes* as x-rays; the traces are scattered too widely.

The *Sortes Sangallenses* can be used to trace the social climate of their time in a different manner, however, as Klingshirn shows. Some

²⁷ Peter Brown, “Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages,” in M. Douglas, ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London and New York 1970), 17-46. The metaphor appears on page 25.

verses mention secular experts (lawyers, judges, doctors); others mention religious remedies; yet others set the Church and the secular world cheek by jowl: one verse advises the mother of a sick child both to summon a physician and to anoint the child with oil blessed by a priest. The *Sortes*' juxtaposition of clerical and secular authority surely reflects the reality in which their enquirers lived. But in the long run, Klingshirn goes on to suggest, the Church rejected the opportunity to make fuller use of the *Sortes* as venues through which its teaching might be promulgated because it wanted to separate its clergy decisively from the worldly concerns of the average parishioner, concerns that divination was well-suited to address. And so, the *Sortes Sangallenses* were no longer copied out after about 600 CE. One assumes that they continued to be used and adapted to new environments—they did not vanish completely—but to the historian's eye their disappearance from the textual record reads as if the strain between Church and secular authority became more than divination could bear. The *Sortes* at the shrine of St. Colluthus fared better because they adapted themselves more fully, as Frankfurter demonstrates, becoming part of a "complex dynamics of promotion" that advanced the authority of Christianity and of St. Colluthus himself, and transforming themselves into a means of "defining and authenticating a Christian pantheon."

Finally, some comments on the order in which my co-editor and I have arranged the essays in this volume. We have eschewed the model offered by many edited volumes, which divide essays amongst three or four thematic groups, because, as we hope that this Introduction has demonstrated, each essay engages with several themes and thereby enters into dialogue with several other essays. Any thematic groups we might have created—and any manner in which we might have divided the essays amongst them—would have obscured some of the contributions made by each essay in favor of highlighting others. Instead, we have chosen to arrange the essays in such a way that each shares some topics or thematic interests with the essay that precedes it and the essay that follows it, and yet simultaneously stands on its own, free of any over-arching category that might have circumscribed it. The specific order we chose is replicated by the order in which the essays were discussed above; we hope that those readers who choose to read the volume from beginning to end will profit from the fact that some of the thematic connections that we found especially important have already been sketched. Of course, that being said, the essays surely

could have been arranged in various other ways as well. Precisely because each of them engages with several others, one might have started with almost any essay and moved from that to another and onward, although the pathways that linked them would have been different. Ideally, perhaps, this volume should be published on a CD and used with a “shuffle” feature that presents the essays in a different order each time it is used, thereby encouraging readers to make new connections.

This volume had its inception in a conference organized by Peter Struck and held at the University of Pennsylvania in April of 2001. All of us who were present in Philadelphia four years ago thank him for a splendidly stimulating weekend of exchange and thank Penn’s Department of Classical Studies, its Research Foundation, and its Center for Ancient Studies, all of which generously supported it. Ralph Rosen, who was Chair of Classical Studies at the time, offered untiring support during both the conference itself and the planning stages, and Alex Purves, who served as graduate assistant for the conference, was essential to its success as well. Like all volumes that originated in conferences, this one rests on the shoulders of many more people than those whose names appear in the Table of Contents.

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SIGNS, COMMANDS, AND KNOWLEDGE:
ANCIENT DIVINATION BETWEEN ENIGMA AND
EPIPHANY

WALTER BURKERT

Cicero thought that the use of divination was universal amongst humans (*De div.* I.1,1). One might agree, insofar as the management of the future is a distinctly human problem. Or rather a double problem, for in fact one must first project what to expect or what to avoid, and second, considering that humans are social animals, one must also find some method of ending dissent and confusion and of deciding what is to be done. Both goals can be achieved by divination.

And yet we know Cicero was wrong. Haruspices have disappeared, and birdwatchers no longer search the skies for supernatural signs. Both Christianity and Islam have abolished divination in theory, and have reduced it to a niche existence in practice. Nonetheless it would be wrong to say that divination is dead, even in modern western cultures. Some years ago it was said to have entered the White House, and a congress of astrologers would draw much bigger crowds than a scholarly congress on divination can muster. During the time of the second world war, when questions about lives and deaths of sons or husbands far away in battle were persistent and unanswerable, there was an outburst of all sorts of divination, from reading coffee-grounds to clairvoyance. Yet divination has largely disappeared from at least the surface of daily life, even if some stock traders secretly use forms of irrational prediction.

In the ancient world, no doubt, divination was ubiquitous; there clearly was a Near Eastern-Mediterranean *koinê* of forms and traditions—with local variants, intercultural infiltrations, and some continuous change of trends or fashions, of course. Cicero noticed with interest the special prestige and forms of divination that existed in Cilicia, where he had held office as proconsul (*De div.* I.1, 2). Among the Romans, Etruria was famous as a center of divination for centuries—unfortunately, none of the Etruscan books of divination now survive. Sizeable collections of cuneiform texts are extant from Mesopotamia, with much the same emphasis on birds and on liver inspection as in Etruria and

Rome, as well as on some additional forms.¹ A collection of Sibylline Oracles has survived, thanks to Christian interest in them, and we still have quite an extensive collection of texts in Greek, Latin and other languages concerning astrology. Bouché-Leclercq's old handbook, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité* (1879-1882) has four volumes; nobody has attempted such a comprehensive account since then, in spite of the fact that we now have oriental texts that were unavailable to Bouché-Leclercq.

As the modern world emerged, divination came to be considered "superstition" and described as "primitive," in opposition to the Enlightenment that was to bring progress towards the understanding and domination of reality. Now, however, most scholars agree that divination cannot really be understood as an irruption of "the primitive" into an orderly world, but rather offers established forms of modeling reality and social interaction, of dealing with crisis and conflict—and as doing so with a high degree of rationality. Divination is not irrational but rather an attempt, perhaps a desperate attempt, to extend the realm of *ratio*, the realm of knowledge and control, beyond the barrier of the future, and the barrier of death, into the misty zones from which normal knowledge and experience is absent. This ambivalence between the irrational and the rational is one of the topics that I will address below.

We should not ignore, of course, the enormous potential of divination as a topic in rhetoric and poetry, as a subject of literary fresco painting. Already in Homer we meet with portentous birds who fly from the left or from the right and do strange things. Remember as well that most wonderful example of poetic divination, the first choral song of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, where two eagles tearing apart a pregnant hare strike the keynote of the tragic plot of violence that is about to unfold, hinting at human aggression and angry gods, and unavoidable guilt. It is divination that turns uncertainties into foreseeable fate and thus gives direction and color to barren events. What would *Macbeth* be without the witches? Cicero, with a mixture of self-complacency and irony, cannot resist the temptation to quote his own poems about himself and the Catilinarian affair in his *De divinatione*; these begin with

¹ On birds: F. Nötscher, "Die Omen-Serie summa āli ina mēlē sakīn." On extispicy, A. Boissier, *Choix de textes relatifs à la divination assyro-babylonienne* (Genève 1905) and I. Starr, *The Rituals of the Diviner* (Malibu 1983).

a grandiose scene of heavenly signs that announce the great events (*De div.* I.9,17 ff). Tacitus was not immune to the allure of divination when he cast the opening of his *Historiae*, nor was Thucydides, given his references to earthquakes and eclipses at the beginning of his work (1.23.3). It is interesting that even Silenus of Caleacte, who wrote for Hannibal, used such “scenic complements” in narrating the Hannibalic War; he introduces an assembly of the gods who order Hannibal to begin his war and give him a daemonic guide (Silenus *FGrHist* 175 F 2 = Cic. *De div.* I.24,49 cf. Liv. 21.22; Dio Cass.13.56.9); we are left to speculate about how far this literary practice is Greek, Punic, or just Mediterranean *koinê*.

But this essay must not pursue the tempting paths of literary interpretation; nor can it try to update Bouché-Leclercq. Rather, to return to my earlier remark, it will present some reflections concerning three paradoxes inherent to what I perceive as either the antagonism or the coincidence of rationality and irrationality in divinatory phenomena:

1. The interference of “natural signs” and “supernatural pronouncements” in divination,
2. The antagonism of pious belief and attempts at control,
3. The ambivalent position of divination between the political and social establishment and potential revolution in ancient society.

I. *Natural Signs and Supernatural Pronouncements*

Ancient theory—see Cicero’s *De divinatione*—used to distinguish between two main forms of divination, “natural” and “technical,” and assigned dreams and ecstasy to the “natural” branch, whereas liver-omens, bird-omens and their like were included in the “technical” section, because these required techniques that had to be “learned” from experts. We are tempted to see things the other way round: to observe signs and to react to them is an absolutely natural behavior, in fact a strategy of life in general; all sorts of animals do it. There is learning by observation of signs, be it by unconscious or conscious recall. Of course learning from signs can also be erroneous or perverse, as Pavlov’s poor dog was compelled to demonstrate at the beginning of the 20th century. But normally, the ability to observe and learn from signs is a token of intelligence. For humans, with their wide and unspecific capacities of perception, the question is, and always has been, how to judge the relevance and meaning of particular signs, how

to distinguish regular sequences from pure coincidence, how to sort out what is meaningful within the vague and poorly delimited sphere of concomitant perceptions. We automatically do this all the time through our sensory apparatuses, as does any living being within the faculties of its own cognitive system. Looked at in this way, divination is nothing “divine” but rather an accumulation of experiences about the relevance and meanings of signs; the results of such experience will, of course, be recorded and taught within the cultural memory of a civilization, and as soon as writing is available, it can be further preserved in written form.

If the fundamentals of how we obtain knowledge through experience are clear in theory, the contents and the limits, the rules for confirmation or refutation are much less clear in practice. *Probatum est* is the old slogan of charlatans; what is to prove the proof? Knowing how to orient oneself by the stars at night is useful practical knowledge—migrating birds who fly at night do the same to find south or north. And since, by some biological automatism, we see groups of stars as figures instead of random assemblages of dots, thus aiding ourselves in orientation, we invent and learn about the constellations—Odysseus is told by Calypso to keep the Bear on his left in order to travel east (*Od.* 5.576-7). Marking the seasons of the year by observing the risings and settings of stars in the morning and/or the evening is just a slightly more advanced form of knowledge, depending on longer experience. Neolithic farmers possessed this knowledge, and possibly even Palaeolithic hunters.

But, as long as we are gazing at the sky, what about weather signs and weather predictions? Red sky in the morning, red sky in the evening; these are comparatively reliable signs of either bad or good weather in central Europe. They are mentioned already in the New Testament and they can be scientifically explained—although far fewer people know about the explanation than know about the signs themselves. Yet in contrast to this widely known and almost universally accepted belief, opinions still differ widely as to the question of whether the moon influences the weather. Ancient calendars had entries for rains, winds, and freezes following on the appearances of certain stars; this was part of the “scientific” information they provided, even if more scholarly editions noted conflicting opinions of the specialists on these ἐπισημασίαι. Even today, some specialist craftsmen think that certain phases of the moon are more appropriate for cutting trees; violin makers in Mittenwald observe the phases of the moon when they

apply varnish to their violins. Are these remnants of old and venerable experiences or are they “superstitions?” To find this out by scientific methods in the modern sense would be uncommonly laborious and time-consuming, and would risk spoiling a lot of violins.

A science that depended heavily on the use of “signs” for prognosis was ancient medicine. It seems that the main thing expected of a doctor was that he could tell in advance whether a sick person was to recover or not, and how soon. Records of single cases in the *epidemiai*-books of the Hippocratic corpus served as a database of accumulated knowledge, but success would still depend largely on the individual doctor’s empathy and situational feeling as well—difficult things to spell out in general terms.

It is important to note that observation of signs, and belief in signs, is not at all dependent on causal explanations; such explanations may eventually be added later through science, or may remain obscure. Poseidonius observed the coincidence of the Atlantic Ocean tides with the appearance of the moon; this knowledge was perpetuated and later confirmed for the Indian ocean (Cic. *De div.* II.14,34; Indian ocean: *Peripl. Mar. Erythr.* 45). For Poseidonius, this was confirmation of his ideas about the *sympatheia* of the cosmos, confirmation that the world interacted with itself like a living being. The practical use of such knowledge for mariners was totally independent from such speculation, however, and what we would call the “scientific” explanation of the phenomenon had to wait for Isaac Newton, some 1700 years later.

It is striking how widespread the practice of bird-watching is in divination: observation of the flight of birds, especially birds of prey, is evident in the dominant practice of ancient *ornithomanteia*, as well as ancient poetry. To explain how this came about, one might speculate about aboriginal humans or proto-hominids being scavengers: if so, it was helpful—indeed necessary—for them to observe birds of prey, especially vultures, in order to find food. In foundation legends, the hero is often instructed to follow an animal; this seems to recall a hunter’s practice. If so, we would be able to see a shift from practical to purely symbolic and hence much more generally applicable behavior in divination, to “superstition” in the full meaning of the word.

But signs can make their meanings explicit only if humans lend them language. Explication and interpretation are the inseparable correlates of observation. For humans, signs become a form of language, not just hints to be followed, but allusions to be understood, commands to be executed. Given that humans are surrounded by

speech from their earliest experiences—by speakers of all kinds with their demands and commands, by voices that indicate, encourage or withhold, even if the speaker is not always clearly identifiable—voices become “signs” in themselves, calling for interpretation and reaction. Amidst uncertainties and confusion even for adults, some voice may suddenly stand out, clearly understood (old Greek words for this are ὄσσα or ὁμφή). Auditory illusions then can come in. The Romans divinized *Aius Locutius*, the voice heard at night that predicted the invasion of the Gauls.

This brings us to the insight that experience based on signs is overtaken by another dimension, a “higher” dimension no longer of pre-notation, but of prediction. Certain women and men seem to “know more” than others. They see, hear and perceive what has escaped others. There are people who command attention by abnormal behavior, who testify to additional dimensions of reality, who carry uncommon messages. They may exhibit forms of altered consciousness—“possession,” “ecstasy,” “trance,” or whatever terms of reference a given language uses. The phenomenon probably is universal, but the attention and treatment it receives varies amongst different civilizations, from acceptance, to repression, to control. In some cases, those who “know more” may be less strikingly marked out or excluded than in others. But at any rate, many cultures include specialists in divination, and even special places in which they can pursue it.

Greeks of the archaic period were averse to describing the phenomena of ecstasy; still more averse have been modern classicists—there have been strange debates about what happened at Delphi, for example. Feelings of “otherness” seem to adhere to the very concept of *theos*; “*thesphaton*” means the utterance of some seer or oracle. There is one ecstatic scene in the *Odyssey*, in which Theoclymenus (a “speaking” name, meaning “god=renowned”) sees impending doom approaching the suitors who are gathered in Odysseus’ hall like a cloud of night suddenly breaking in (*Od.* 20. 350 ff.); the suitors call him “crazy.” Scholars have claimed that the scene is alien to Homeric style and therefore have attributed it to some problematic *Bearbeiter*. But these phenomena were common in cultures adjacent to Greece. Akkadian has a term for “getting crazy” that is applied to males and females in certain sanctuaries who deliver their messages in such a state (mahû – mahhû AHW 586/582); Bronze age texts from Mari on the Euphrates and later texts from the court of Assurbanipal preserve their pronouncements. The Egyptian Wenamon meets with the phenomenon

at Byblos (ANET 26). The Hebrew Bible speaks about the “spirit” possessing prophets and calls the prophets “those who speak out” (nabî, see HAL). Among the Greeks, it was Aeschylus who discovered the theatrical potential of ecstasy: witness that most enthralling scene in the *Agamemnon*, in which Cassandra becomes ecstatic. Later Plato, in his *Phaedrus*, made *mania*, “craziness,” not only respectable, but a basic faculty of the human psyche. Crazy or not, the specialist called a *mantis* is taken for granted in Homer, linked to the generals or a migrant who might be invited into a city; even the Cyclopes once kept a “famous” seer amongst them (*Od.* 9.508-10).

Thus the “rational” use of signs met with proclamations of altered consciousness at an early date in the geographic region we are considering. Interpretation of signs means to search for clarification by speech;² this can be done in rational discussion, but such discussion hardly overcomes uncertainty; to hit the point, to make some solution evident seems to be a special gift of one enlightened mind at a special moment; this is “dealing with divine,” *θειασμός*. This is the point at which experience comes into contact with the proclamations of altered consciousness. Questions of understanding and requirements of belief intertwine; rational inquiry becomes acceptance of revelation and of the commands that emanate from revelation.

We need not speculate about the origins of religion here; the presence of religion is taken for granted in all of the high cultures of antiquity. There are gods, there are priests, there are rituals, especially rituals in which offerings are made; there are myths, there are aboriginal traditions and teachings, amidst both open and hidden interests, of course, amidst power and cunning. The observation of signs and abnormal proclamations were drawn into the sphere of religion long before our sources begin; humans generally assume the existence of superior partners who are willing to communicate. The center of cult, sacrifice, becomes the center of divination. Observance of signs thus becomes “divination:” Latin *divinatio* evidently means “doing the divine,” and no less does the ancient Greek word *θεός* imply such dealings. Thucydides (7.50.4) chides Nicias, who kept his private “seers,” for his propensity for *θειασμός*.

If signs are ambivalent, if signs need interpretation, if signs are

² In fact interpretation can be a second “randomizing device,” S.I. Johnston, “Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination,” *Arethusa* 34 (2001): 109 f.

bound to risk understanding or misunderstanding, then religion, by force of a special chain of tradition, usually comes with a claim of certainty within a world of language. The answer precedes the question. Divination may be described as a quest for epiphany beneath a misty surface, but there are spontaneous epiphanies too. A world that includes gods is fuller than a world without them. Yet proclamations of piety do not eliminate the risks and uncertainties of existence. The drive to “know more” remains.

II. *Belief, Skepticism, and Control*

As divination became an established part of religion, controversies about divination formed part of the dispute over piety versus skepticism or even atheism from at least the fifth century BCE. Modern scholars, too, have been prone to see, for example, the decline of oracles as paralleling a decline in piety, although others warned that the decline of “true” piety gives rise to a surge in “superstition.”

Stoics, in particular, developed a thesis through which divination and religion could be mutually corroborated: if religion exists, then there is divination—and vice versa: if divination exists, then this proves that gods exist and care for humans; this is set out fully in Cicero’s *De divinatione*. Even before the Stoics, however, Sophocles had made the problem of divination a *Leitmotiv* of his *Oedipus Rex*: if the prediction made by Apollo at Delphi concerning the fate of Oedipus were to be falsified, if human manipulation were to prevail against the god’s oracle, the gods themselves would have failed, their power would have been abolished. This is the concern of the great choral ode: “No longer shall I go to worship the untouchable navel of the Earth, Delphi... nowhere is Apollo manifest in his honors: The divine is disappearing (ἔρρει δὲ τὰ θεῖα)” (OT 898-910). The outcome of the tragedy is proof to the contrary: “This was Apollo” (1329). It is through oracles that the divine proves its existence and its superiority.

Yet to the unprejudiced observer, the relation of divination to religion is much more complicated: it seems to be rather loose in many respects, and at best experimental in each case. To use divination does not presuppose any strong religious belief; rather, the effectiveness of the divination may surprise one, and thereby either confirm beliefs that had already been held before or even generate new beliefs.

In Mesopotamia, we find elaborate contexts of prayer and ritual in

which extispicy takes place,³ but also omen books that do not mention any gods; they work with a simple structure of “if – then:” “if an eagle flies from right to left...,”⁴ or “if ... at birth the head (of the child) is already full of grey hair....”⁵ Even if such lists claim to be based on experience, cultural memory, of course, is selective; it will yield to authority and evade scientific criteria.

Certain oracles worked by drawing lots or casting dice, as Fritz Graf and William Klingshirn discuss in their contributions to this volume.⁶ There has been a debate about whether, and to what extent, Delphi used such a method. But at any rate, methods that use such random generators are very effective tools for bringing “objectivity” into human dealings and human conflicts. Humans cannot escape the necessity of making projections into the future, and, within a field of multiple interests, pros and cons, bribes and threats, they need some device to rule out the pressures of interest and power, to end a quarrel, to obviate fighting. This is wise, but it is not intrinsically religious. To accept the results produced by lots or dice presupposes absolutely rational preparations, a pledge to accept the result, the ruling out of manipulation, and, normally, some arrangement that guarantees equality of chance. This involves prudence and intelligence; it does not involve gods.

Indeed we find the gods themselves resorting to this method, even for their most important decision, namely how to divide the universe among themselves. This idea is shared by the Babylonian *Atrahasis* epic and Homer’s *Iliad* (15.188-93): the gods drew lots, and thereby Heaven, Sea, and the Netherworld were assigned to the three most important among them, to Anu, Ea and Enlil in the Mesopotamian myth, and to Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, according to Homer. There is no idea in either *Atrahasis* or the *Iliad* that this presupposes some super-god predetermining the outcome. The random device, as used by humans, is accepted without question by the gods: automatism works without providence. To repeat: drawing lots is absolutely rational and effective—indeed, it has recently been suggested as a method of distributing places at universities amongst potential students.

³ See Starr.

⁴ Nötscher nr.1; cf. Xen. *Anab.* 6.1.23: a sitting eagle.

⁵ *Summa izbu* 4.1.

⁶ Teiresias in Eur. *Phoen.* 838 has *kleroi* after hearing the voices of birds—variously explained in the *scholia*.

Still, certain ancient sanctuaries flourished on the use of lots or dice through which the god was believed to speak out. Most famous was the thriving cult of Fortuna at Praeneste, which by the Hellenistic age had a sumptuous sanctuary. The ritual used there was to throw dice—ancient, sacred dice, that had been miraculously revealed in the distant past, as the legend said. To insure that no one manipulated the process, the dice were thrown by innocent children.⁷ “At no other place than Praeneste has Fortuna been more fortunate,” said Carneades, referring to the splendid setting of the cult (Cic. *De div.* 2.41, 87). The religious *façon de parler* had prevailed and taken over the random device.

Drawing lots also became an established Christian practice, more sectarian perhaps than orthodox, but combined with prayer in every case, and endowed with New Testament authority (Acts 1:26); there was theological discussion about this (see *Legenda Aurea* 238 with reference to Hieronymus, Dionysius Areopagita, and Bede). A variant was to open the Bible and to read the first sentence that struck the eye—a more literate randomizing device. This was done by King Chilperich at the Tomb of Saint Martin at Tours, in about 500 CE.⁸

Carneades was not the first to criticize divination; criticism surrounded it from the start. Already Herodotus saw that there was a need to defend *mantikê*, and to defend Bacis in particular, whose predictions, he claimed, had come true so evidently, ἐναργέως (8.77 bis); that “as to refuting oracles, neither do I myself dare to do it nor do I accept it from others.” Here the word used for “refute,” καταβάλλειν (9.77.1), may well refer to Protagoras’ καταβάλλοντες [λόγοι]. This does not exclude the fact that Herodotus knows about the possibility of interpolating verses into oracle books, as Onomacritus had done (7.6), and even of bribing the Pythia.⁹ Aristophanes constantly makes fun of the oracle mongers. But such charges never destabilized religion. (Further on Bacis, Onomacritus and other independent diviners, see Dillery’s contribution to this volume).

Divination never eclipses the intelligence even of believers; it is not a “primitive” phenomenon of credulity; there is no question of a *sacrificium intellectus*. Of course, divination works without obstacles,

⁷ See also S.I. Johnston.

⁸ Gregorius of Tours 5,14 p.302 ff. tells about books of the Bible deposited for three nights at the tomb of St. Martin, to be opened then.

⁹ R. Parker, “Greek States and Greek Oracles,” in R. Buxton, ed., *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford 2000); cf. Aeschines 3.130: φιλιππίζει.

when it deals with cults, i.e., decides about the divine, which god to honor, at which occasion, by which means (cf. Pl. *Rep.* 421bc); this pertains to sacrifices, festivals, priests and priestesses (cf. SEG 30,1286 Didyma), and so on. The Athenians asked Delphi to which heroes they were to assign their ten new *phylai* in 510 BCE, having prepared a list of 100 names from which Apollo could choose (Arist. *Ath.Pol.*21.6). Oracles, then, seem to need some guidance, or at least careful preparation. Xenophon's well-known trick, when marching with Cyrus against Persia, of asking the god not what to do but to which gods to sacrifice in order to succeed was in fact common practice (*Anab.*3.1.6).

Believing in oracles did not mean that communication with the divine became simple; rather, complexity increased. Notwithstanding piety, we see a contest of intelligence evolving; oracles become intentionally enigmatic through their ambiguity (Parker 80, n. 14), so that debates about the sense of an oracle provoked all kinds of linguistic sagacity. The best known case was the Pythian oracle about the "Wooden Walls," delivered to the Athenians when the Persians were marching towards their city. To quote Robert Parker:

Apollo referred the problem back to [the Athenians]; discussion resumed, though in appearance at a different level: no longer a problem of tactics or politics, but of philology (80).

The Greeks still agreed afterwards that the god of Delphi had presented decisive guidance for the great war, and dedicated their victory monument, the snake column with tripod, at Delphi. Piety finally crowned the contest of intelligence.

But belief excludes neither intelligence nor manipulation. There may be attempts to get beyond the test and to influence the outcome directly, by tricks, by bribes, or by more sophisticated methods—remember Xenophon's careful phrasing. Xenophon also reports that the Spartan general Agesipolis used an elaborate strategy of questioning the gods, which left no other possibility to the divine partner than to agree, finally, to what the general had planned (*Hell.*4.7.2; cf. Athens on *orgas*, Rosenberger 56 f.). During the siege of Tyros, when Alexander's *mantis* Aristandros predicted that he would take the city "this month," Alexander just changed the calendar and lengthened the month by a few days (Plut. *Alex.* 25) and thus fulfilled the prediction instead of allowing his *mantis*' prediction to fail. "He always supported prophecy zealously," Plutarch writes, συμφιλοτιμούμενος αἰεὶ τοῖς μαντεύμασιν. Is this strong belief or reckless manipulation?

Least of all does belief exclude methods of control. Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704-681 BCE), proudly tells how he would assemble the diviners in “three or four” separate groups, so that they could not communicate, and ask his question. The seers’ response was unanimous; we find without surprise that it was what Sennacherib himself had surmised it would be already. So Sennacherib leaves this counsel to his son: Never make any decision without the diviners—but make three or four groups of them. This is to reinforce religion by the principle of “belief is good, control is better.” Sennacherib does not tell what he would have done if the seers disagreed. Herodotus (4.68) tells of how Scythians proceeded in such a case: if the king got sick, they called forth three diviners, who inevitably declared that somebody had committed perjury “by the hearth of the king” and thus had caused the king’s disease. If the accused man claimed his innocence, six more diviners were summoned, and this multiplication might go on until a clear majority vote came about to identify the culprit. Quite a democratic procedure, except for the so-called culprit, and for the minority diviners who were burned to death—the sort of professional risk that a singular position brings with it, or even retaliation of the commoners against those who had arrogantly assumed “superior knowledge.”

Note that the institution of Delphi, and similar oracle sanctuaries, carried with them forms of control from the outset. To turn to long-standing sanctuaries meant to disqualify charismatics, whether they were permanently *in situ* or wandering. They still had their chances, too, as the story about Epimenides at Athens shows. But oracle sanctuaries do not become active by themselves; in contrast to a prophet of the Old Testament type, they waited for consultants to come. Such a sanctuary was outside of any major city and thus assumedly would not be directly involved in political struggles (although this did not prevent “sacred wars” over Delphi itself). Consultation was expensive, because of the travel costs and of the sacrifices required; moreover, it was time consuming, especially as it was left to the god whom he would admit, and when. No sudden revelations were to be expected.

Different, and much more elaborate, was the control of divination at Rome, with quite a system of checks and balances. Cicero thought such matters properly required serious legislation, and he included pertinent articles in his own drafts of *leges* (*Leg.* 2.20). One had to have, among others, the *augures*, high-class Romans, members of the Senate—who did not, in fact, make any predictions but who

gave authority to certain ritual acts. There were also the *haruspices*, exclusively Etruscans, whose special *ars* was transmitted within their families—foreigners at Rome who could be treated accordingly. And there were written texts, purportedly from the period of the kings: the Sibylline Books written in Greek verses, accessible only in cases of emergency by decree of the senate, through a special committee of *Quindecimviri*. When the Sibylline Books were burnt in 83 BCE, they were reconstructed from parallel Greek traditions; Virgil started his most famous poem with reference to a *Cumaeum Carmen*, and then Augustus transferred the books to his temple of Apollo Palatinus and thus made imperial control of them definitive.

Disbelief made King Tarquin of Rome provoke the augur Attus Navius: “divine by your augural art whether it is possible to do what I am thinking of at this moment.” Navius, after performing his ritual, said “yes,” and what Tarquin had thought was impossible Attus Navius performed: he cut a whetstone with a razor (Liv.1.36.2-6; Cic. *De div.*1.17,32). In consequence, Livy comments, “such great honor was brought to the auguries and the priestly office of the augurs that no action was taken, in war or in the city, without the auspices: assemblies of the people, levies of the troops, all the greatest affairs would be broken up if the birds did not approve” (*auguriis certe sacerdotioque augurum tantus honos accessit ut nihil belli domique postea nisi auspiciato gereretur, concilia publica, exercitus vocati, summa rerum, ubi aves non admisissent, dirimerentur*). Superhuman authority is based on a miracle, special gods need not be mentioned. Divination needs support by experimentation, and gets it. The stone was preserved as a witness for the veracity of augural art. This example, as adduced in Cicero’s *De divinatione*, has nothing to do with prediction, it just stresses the authority of *auguratio*, within the social order of Rome.

Herodotus (1.147 f.) tells about how king Croesus, who would not believe in them without proof, tested the veracity of oracles. His trick was similar to Tarquin’s: “guess what I am doing,” he asked all of the most famous oracles. Croesus found out that Delphi was by far the “most truth-speaking oracle,” and thereby brought his gold to Delphi—although even this did not prevent his downfall, at last, after he had misinterpreted a Delphic Oracle. This outcome seems to have been a problem for Delphi, but the oracle explained it all away (Hdt. 1.90-91).

Take, finally, one case of a “believer” whom we know well: Xenophon. By authority of the Delphic oracle, he had obtained Zeus Basi-

leus as his personal “*mantikos*” (6.1.22). In his *Anabasis*, he tells how the “Ten Thousand,” those ex-mercenaries transformed into a marauding pack of desperados, fought their way back to the Greek world through plundering and robbery. Each enterprise of the kind is preceded by hepatoscopy, which means, in Xenophon’s words, “to communicate with the gods,” τοῖς θεοῖς ἀνακοινῶσαι (6.1.22). In a certain situation the presages were negative for days. Hunger took over, and all the sheep had been eaten—not one was left for hepatoscopy. They had to use cattle, which should have drawn their wagons, and still they did not receive the positive sign they longed for. Understandably, some set out for an expedition, contrary to the “sign” they had received, and they promptly failed. Then, finally, inspection of yet another new liver provided a positive omen, Xenophon himself set out to lead the raid, and they were successful (6.4.12 ff.; 6.5.1-2 ff.).

This is an account of experience, without any theological explanation, let alone moral justification, without emotional evocation of any personal god. But it confirms what piety should have known before. As Sennacherib had advised, never make any decision without the diviners. Xenophon himself lays stress on his “trust” in the “sacred proceedings,” τοῖς ἱεροῖς πιστεύσας;¹⁰ this is εὐσέβεια. In his defence of Socrates, Xenophon turns his teacher’s uncanny *daimonion* into a form of “normal” *mantikê* (*Apol.* 11-13 = *Mem.* 1.1.2-5): How absurd to suspect Socrates of being an atheist if he used divination! Xenophon also says he learned much about the relevant liver signs himself just by standing so often at the side of the *mantis* as he cut up the victim—and others, too, would stand by to look on, he added (6.4.15). Observation, experience, and belief strengthen each other. We find no conflict of ideas or struggle of beliefs in Xenophon.

An Athenian epigram of the fifth century offers a strange public proclamation about oracles; it refers to some disastrous defeat, probably the defeat at Coroneia in 446 BCE, and endeavors to find sense in the catastrophe: this was not the fault of the Athenian soldiers who died, but some superior power, the text says; some demi-god (τις ... ἡμιθέον) has caused this, he “cut the crop for the enemies,” and “for all mortals, in future, he has made it an article of faith not to disregard the object of oracles,” βροτοῖσι δὲ πᾶσι τὸ λοιπὸν φράζεσθαι

¹⁰ *Anab.* 5.2.9; cf. Bellerophon’s slaughter of the chimaera *Il.* 6.183: θεῶν τεράτεσσι πιθήσας.

λογίον πιστὸν ἔθηκε τέλος (CEG 5). There had been a tendency to disregard certain oracles before; conflicts between strategy and the seer's pronouncement were unavoidable in practice; but the result, burned into memory by the catastrophe and broadcast by the inscription, was a cautionary tale of piety, and an opportunity for poetry.

III. *Establishment and Revolt*

Attempts at controlling divination bring us to the third paradox or antagonism to be dealt with here: divination between establishment and crisis or even revolt, between the integration of divination's proceedings and representatives into the social-political system and divination as a disruptive, revolutionary, sometimes uncontrollable power.

As to professional divination, we meet with two types in the Orient, as well as in Greece, Etruria and Rome: there are migrating charismatics, self-appointed, with more or less long-term success, who may compose certain "families" and successions; and there are local sanctuaries with their special ritual institutions, which may persist and prove successful for centuries—in the Greek world, Delphi, Didyma, and Claros were the most prominent. Neither type is immune to economic interests; hence the conflicts in which they eventually find themselves are not purely spiritual nor theoretical. It was from Delphi, not from Islamic lands, that the notion of "sacred war" arose.

Local oracles were usually eager to forge connections to the powers that be. Two considerable sets of oracles survive from cuneiform civilizations, from Mari at the Euphrates, about 1800 BCE, and from Ishtar of Arbela, in the time of Assurbanipal, the seventh century. These usually were delivered by women who "got crazy," and through whom the goddess spoke; afterwards their message was reported to the king. What is striking about these texts is that they normally are quite uninformative, even dull: They usually say not much more than "Hail to the king, do not be afraid, the God is with you, the god is at your side, the god has given your enemies into your hands." It is exceptional for them to say "no" to anything, for example, to a building project. We perceive that a king, however powerful, is desperately in need of reassurance, of strengthening his ego. He will be grateful for such an oracular message, and send appropriate gifts to the goddess or god. The prosperous interaction of divine and secular interests is not at all hidden: the sanctuary expects riches from the king in return for these edifying reports.

This helps us to understand better what must have happened between the monarchs of Lydia and Delphi. Gyges, king of Lydia, the usurper, sought support from east and from west; he sent his embassy to Nineveh, as we read in Assurbanipal's annals, and he consulted the oracle at Delphi, leaving conspicuous amounts of gold there. Apollo's response to Gyges must have sounded to his ears very much like the eastern messages: "Hail to the king, the God is with you." The game was repeated, with more gold for Delphi, by Croesus (Hdt. 1.55); Amasis, king of Egypt, followed suit as well (Hdt. 2.180). No wonder Croesus' catastrophe meant trouble for Delphi. But even in later days, Delphi was not squeamish in asking for gifts (Parke-Wormell nr. 284).

During the classical epoch, the situation in Greece was different, due to the paucity of kings. Still, this became the period of glory for individual seers, *manteis*, who constantly accompanied the armies involved in ever increasing military conflicts (see further John Dillery's contribution to this volume). Our picture is not solely dependent on Herodotus. Through Isocrates we hear about the success and the fortune left by a certain Polemainetos, "Praised in War,"—a speaking name indeed. In contrast to Rome, it was not the Greek general who functioned as the lord of *auspicia*. His measures depended decisively on the seer's assessment of sheep livers—as it was still practiced by the mercenaries with Xenophon. There must have been fierce competition among seers for the leading roles, with the ancestral claims of certain families—Deiphonos son of Euenios (Hdt. 9.92), Teisamenos the descendant of Melampus. But what proved irrefutable was the testimony of success. A seer could be "victorious" in battle as well as a *strategos*. The story of Teisamenos, the "victor" at Plataiai, as Herodotus tells it (9.33-35), shows how *poleis* even had to make a deal to "hire" a promising mantis (ἐμισθοῦντο 9.34.1); Teisamenos could press the Spartans to grant full citizenship to him and to his brother. Prophet becomes citizen—what an impressive career—although we must not forget that the *mantis* might also die on the battlefield.

Things were different and yet comparable at Rome. Cicero, among others, shows us how divination was integrated into the political system of Republican Rome. In his *De divinatione* he has to defend his own office as augur. Augures were chosen among the upper class, without further qualification, to give authority to certain formal acts. "We are not the sort of augurs who predict the future by observing birds and other things," he insists (2.33,70), *non enim sumus ii nos augures qui avium*

reliquorumve observatione futura dicamus. Maybe Romulus was primitive enough to believe such things. “but we preserve, in view of the belief of the people and of great advantages for the state, the custom, the scrupulosity, the discipline, the law of augurs, [and hence] the authority of the committee,” (2.33,70), *retinetur autem et ad opinionem vulgi et ad magnas utilitates rei publicae mos religio disciplina ius augurium collegi auctoritas*.¹¹ Cicero quotes the dry formalism of the ritual dialogue between an augur and his assistant (*De div.* 2.33-35,70-73), a play of questions and answers in archaic vocabulary, without observing or just looking at anything (cf. *Leg.* 3.43). The notorious “smile of augurs” (or *haruspices*: Cic. *De div.* 2.24,51-52) has less to do with a failure of belief—as if conscious deception were going on—than with the situation of being bound to such a traditional role, which is felt to be awkward. (I could not suppress smiling the one time I had to wear a dinner jacket.)

In the Roman system we notice an elaborate system of checks and balances, with *augures*, *auspicia*, Etruscan *haruspices*, *libri Sibyllini* and their appropriate committees, and the appeal to Delphi too. Military command meant to “have” the *auspicia*. Although these were no longer observed regularly after the first century BCE (Cic. *De div.* 2.36,76 f.), the cautionary tales of catastrophic failure caused by their neglect still were told. Was this done just to provide an excuse, and a scapegoat, in case of defeat? At the same time the Romans did much to suppress uncontrolled divination: oracular books were sequestered and burnt during the Hannibalic war, in 212 BCE (Liv. 25.12.2 *conquisitio talium librorum*), and we hear about unrest stirred by the *carmina Marciana* during these difficult years (Marcius, it was said, had been an inspired *vates*, but it is not very clear what his verses promised).¹² The senate repeatedly took measures against necromancers and magi and, with the rise of astrology, against “Chaldaeanes.”

At any rate, it was known, and feared, that uncontrolled, charismatic divination might result in forms of revolt—we might remember that there are fully documented cases of such events in modern history, of charismatics leading revolts by force of their visions, mostly with disastrous results. One shocking example was the Tai Ping revolution

¹¹ Cf. *Leg.* 1.31: *rei p. causa conservatum ac retentum*; *De div.* 1.47,105: *salutis augurium*.

¹² Cic. *De div.* 1.40,89 with Pease *ad loc.*; 1.50,115; Liv. 25.12.

in China (1851-1864), which left an estimated 30 million dead.¹³ It was motivated by one visionary, who had had one vision of some strange god. Not too far from Philadelphia occurred the last great revolt of Native Americans, headed by Tecumseh and his brother Lalawethika, a shaman, called Tenskwatawa, “Open Door.” He had had his decisive revelation in 1805 and died at 1811 in “Prophetstown;” the revolt itself came to an end, finally, in 1813.¹⁴ Such events seem to be rare in antiquity, notwithstanding the opposition of prophets against kings in Israel, or some Greek myths about kings toppled by oracles. We hear about an oracle of Dodona that told the troops to “be on their guard against their leaders” (ἡγεμόνας φυλάττεσθαι, Dem. 19.297; Deinarch. 1.78.98) at the time of the battle at Chaironeia—surely disastrous advice when it comes to military discipline. At Sparta, the sign of a meteor—a sign that is not too infrequent once one starts to look at the sky at night—could lead to the unseating of a king (Plut. *Cleom.* 11; Parker 100).

But take note of the Bacchanalian affair in 186 BCE, in Italy and particularly Rome; these mystery celebrations were termed a *coniuratio* and relentlessly suppressed by the Roman Senate, with thousands of executions. This movement had at its center a special form of secret ritual, mysteries (*initia*), first organized in Campania by a priestess “under order of the gods,” *deum monitu*, i.e. by some form of epiphany, just as in Euripides’ *Bacchae* it is claimed that Dionysus himself gave his *orgia* to his priest;¹⁵ Livy adds a *quasi* (*quasi deum monitu*) (39.13.9), to express his own disbelief. In the meetings of those initiates, Livy says, it was common for men to begin prophesying, with frantic movements of their bodies: *viros velut mente capta cum iactatione fanatica corporis vaticinari*. This is similar not only to the exhibitions in the cult of the Syrian goddess (Apul. *Met.* 8.27 *divino spiritu repletus*), but also to phenomena that Paul could bring about in his early Christian communities, called the epiphany of the Holy Spirit; Paul took care to control it—see his letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 12-14). In the case of the Bacchanalia we can only speculate what this meant for the adherents, probably marginalized people who had failed to participate in the grand

¹³ R.G. Wagner, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion* (Berkeley 1982).

¹⁴ *Encyclopedia of Religion* XIV 361.

¹⁵ Eur. *Ba.* 470 ὁρῶν ὁρῶντα, καὶ δίδωσιν ὄργια.

progress of Roman power after the Hannibalic war. At any rate this was a religious movement based on special experience of the divine, on epiphany presented in prophecy, notwithstanding the accusations of sexual debauchery used to legitimize the cruel suppression of this movement towards a “new society.”

More dangerous for ancient society was the movement of Eunus, leader of the great slave revolt in Sicily about 130 BCE; we have the account of Poseidonius in Diodorus (34/5.1.5 ff.; *FGrHist* 87 F 108; not in Edelstein-Kidd). Eunus came from Apamea in Syria, he was a miracle worker and prophet of the Great Mother Goddess. The Syrian Goddess, he said, had appeared to him and predicted that he should become king (§ 7; compare Macbeth and his witches). Eunus then claimed that he constantly received the commands of the gods in his dream (θεῶν ἐπιτάγμασι καθ’ ὕπνον, § 5); and later that he saw gods even when awake, even that he heard from them what was going to happen (*ib.*). Those slaves who started the revolt asked him whether the gods were on their side; he not only gave confirmation, but led their attack on Enna himself (10 f.). It took years to crush this revolt, and Sicily never really recovered from that. Today one finds a fine bronze monument of Eunus at Enna tearing away the chains of slavery. But more was at work than just class battle in a Marxist key: divination was there as well.

Roman control could barely prevent the spread of seers and prophets of all sorts, and especially not the diffusion of written oracles, which became increasingly anti-Roman by the second century BCE with the establishment of the imperium. Harald Fuchs, in his essay *Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom in der antiken Welt*, has treated some strange tales connected with these events: propagandistic legends about soldiers turning mad or dead men rising to prophesy against the ruling power.¹⁶ Hopes for an anti-Roman king from the East began to take form, centering for a while on Mithradates, “presented by the Sun god,” as his name was correctly understood; some of the oracles survive, with Jewish and Christian redaction, in the *Sibylline Oracles*. Neither these nor the parallel development of apocalypticism, that most universal form of the seer’s achievement, can be treated in detail here, but we should remember the *magi* who came to Jerusalem from the East, claiming that they had observed the sign of the star and knew that the

¹⁶ Harald Fuchs, *Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom in der antiken Welt* (Berlin 1938).

new king had been born, which meant terror to the ruling king and his capital. To “know more” means to shake the establishment.

We end up with a final paradox: to know the future seems to imply that everything is fixed in advance—remember the fate of King Oedipus. But to wait for the birds and to observe them flying, to wait for lightning to flash, a meteor to fall, or even to listen to the rustling leaves of the tree at Dodona or to look for reflections in Didyma’s water meant to get out of a closed, egocentric system, to get into touch with “otherness,” with the whole environment, to experience the all-embracing net of existence, nay universal *sympatheia*, expecting the unexpected. This ought to challenge even the noisy self-resonance of contemporary society.

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ROLLING THE DICE FOR AN ANSWER

Fritz Graf

Divination¹—“the foresight (*praesensio*) and knowledge of the future”, in Cicero’s definition²—has always been caught between the horns of belief and skepticism that form the basic structure of Cicero’s dialogue on the topic, between the serious trust of Quintus and the smiling connivance of the augur Marcus. Already the Greek and Roman debate shows how difficult it is to overcome this dichotomy; this might be one of the reasons that scholars, especially scholars of antiquity, have been remarkably reluctant to address divination in the past. No English book on the topic has appeared since Halliday’s *Greek Divination* of 1913, with the exception of monographs about Delphi and the like, where archaeology and history were more important than the phenomenon of divination *per se*; outside the Anglo-Saxon world, Jean-Pierre Vernant’s *Divination et rationalité* of 1974 looks rather erratic and isolated.³ This paper tries to steer clear of this dichotomy by focusing on a set of documents that can throw some light upon the function of divination in a given social setting, since it is the social practice and social function of divination which, I think, bridge the gap between the Ciceronian dichotomy.

The topic of this contribution is a specific type of oracle, those that are based on pre-existing oracular answers, “fertige Antworten,”

¹ I thank not only the participants of this conference, but also the audiences at the Columbia Greek Seminar and the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, D.C. (and especially Ortwin Dally, now at Freie Universität Berlin) for stimulating criticism and help.

² Cic. *De Div.* 1,1 *vetus opinio est iam usque ab heroicis ducta temporibus, eaque et populi Romani et omnium gentium firmata consensu, versari quandam inter homines divinationem, quam Graeci μαντικήν appellant, id est praesensionem et scientiam rerum futurarum* “There is an opinion, as old as the epoch of the heroes and agreed upon by the Roman people and by all other nations, that divination has an existence among humans; and the Greeks call it *mantikê*, that is the foresight and knowledge of the future”.—See also *De Div.* 1.9 *de divinatione, quae est earum rerum quae fortuitae putantur praedictio atque praesensio* “on divination, that is the foretelling and foresight of those things that are thought to happen by chance.”

³ Halliday (1913); Jean-Pierre Vernant et al., *Divination et rationalité* (Paris 1974).

in Gudmund Björck's term.⁴ An oracle is a divine answer to a specific question; the question in turn results from an event that often is perceived as a crisis. The relationship between event and answer is more complex than one might assume. Herodotus' Croesus provoked different oracular shrines to give widely differing answers to the same question,⁵ while his Aristodicus of Cymae rejected Didymean Apollo's first answer and got a better one:⁶ and when in 166 CE the Clarian oracle had to answer the question of several cities about how to react to the pestilence ravaging them after Lucius Verus' Mesopotamian adventure, it responded with five widely differing answers that took into account various local religious and political circumstances.⁷

But besides these texts, which were generated as responses to events, there were in Greece and Rome, as in most literate cultures, oracles that preceded the event, where a preexistent answer was waiting for the question to come. They might be authoritative texts that did not originate as oracles, such as the *Aeneid* used in the medieval *sortes Virgilianae*, or as the Bible was used already by Augustine to answer a pressing question.⁸ Or they might be oracles in the strict sense of the term—like the collection of Bacis that a soothsayer tries to sell to the new colony in Aristophanes' *Birds*, or the three books of Sibylline Oracles consulted by the Roman Senate in times of utter crisis.⁹ In both cases, there was an immediate need to construct a reference to the event and to its solution in the text: texts like these need interpreters who perceive the semantic cracks and gaps that can be opened up towards the actual event—which is not to say, perhaps surprisingly, that the oracles generated as an immediate and targeted response would not have needed interpretation in ancient Greece and Rome. Delphic oracles regularly triggered debates in the Athenian

⁴ Björck (1939).

⁵ Hdt. 1.46–55. See Jon D. Mikalson, *Herodotus and Religion in the Persian Wars* (Chapel Hill 2003), 56.

⁶ Hdt. 1.159.

⁷ See Zsuzsanna Varhélyi, "Magic, Religion, and Syncretism at the Oracle of Claros," in Sulochana R. Asirvathan, Corinne Ondine Pache, and John Watrous, eds., *Beyond Magic and Religion. Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society* (Lanham, Md., 2001), 13–31.

⁸ See Augustine's justification of this practice, *Epist.* 55, 20, 37, and the ensuing debate on the *sortes biblicae*, for which see Klingshirn (2002): 82–4, 104–14 and his contribution to this volume.

⁹ Bacis: Ar. *Av.* 962; Sibyl: Varro, *Ant. rer. div.* frg. 56a Cardauns = Lact. *Inst.* 1.6.10f.; Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 4.62; Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 1.19, citing *antiquae annales*.

assembly, as Robert Parker pointed out,¹⁰ and the same was true in Rome—when, to name just one example, in 204 BCE Delphi ordered the Romans to bring Cybele to Rome and to have the best of the Romans receive her, this latter provision led to a debate about whom the oracle meant.¹¹ Oracles never were texts that gave all the answers one needed: already Heraclitus understood them as signs from Apollo, neither commands nor riddles that would provoke and sometimes defy human ingenuity.¹²

I. *Finding the Monuments*

Among the many inscriptions with which Asia Minor has fascinated generations of epigraphers since the time of that intriguing Italian merchant Ciriaco of Ancona,¹³ there is a group of texts that gained quick but somewhat short-lived fame in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁴ After that, scholars nearly forgot them again, with a few laudable but sometimes ambivalent exceptions, such as Robin Lane Fox, who devotes a quarter page of his bulky *Pagans and Christians* to them; only the chapter on fortune-telling in William Hansen's remarkable *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature* gives them more space and consideration.¹⁵ They remained very much

¹⁰ Robert Parker, "Greek States and Greek Oracles," in Richard Buxton, ed., *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford 2000), 76-108 (originally in: P. A. Cartledge and F. D. Harvey, eds., *Crux: Essays in Greek History Presented to G. E. M. de Ste. Croix on his 75th Birthday. History of Political Thought*. Special Issue 6.1-2 [1985]: 298-326).

¹¹ Livy 29.11.6 (the oracle), 14.6-8 (the Senate's decision).

¹² Heraclitus D-K 22 B 93; see Pietro Pucci, *Enigma, segreto, oracolo* (Rome 1996), 188-90.

¹³ On Ciriaco Pizzicolli, better known as Ciriaco d'Ancona after his city of birth (1391-1455), see Jean Colin, *Cyriaque d'Ancone: Le voyageur, le marchand, l'humaniste* (Paris 1981); the recent edition of a contemporary biography, Francesco Scalamonti's *Vita viri clarissimi et famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*, Charles Mitchell and Edward W. Bodnar, eds., *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 86: 4 (Philadelphia 1996); and two interesting local publications: Michele Polverari, ed., *Mediterranea: Ciriaco d'Ancona*, Catalogo della mostra (Ancona 1991) and Gianfranco Paci and Sergio Sconocchia, eds., *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo*, Atti del Convegno internazionale organizzato dall'Accademia Marchigiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti (Ancona, 6-9 febbraio 1992) (Reggio Emilia 1998).

¹⁴ Besides articles dealing with special problems (see my bibliography), see Haliday (1913), 212-215.

¹⁵ Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth and New York 1986), 209; see also David S. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from*

the domain of epigraphers—Johannes Nollé, who has promised us a corpus of all the texts, wrote a useful but short and popularizing introduction to the topic.¹⁶

The texts in question are the so-called “dice oracles” from southwestern Anatolia. These fascinating inscriptions all belong to an area that is geographically and chronologically clearly defined—its center is the large and fertile plain of Pamphylia that opens out to the gulf between Lycia and Cilicia, and its hinterland is the cities of Pisidia, eastern Lycia, Southern Phrygia and western Rough Cilicia. All the texts belong to the second century CE.¹⁷ The inscriptions, when well preserved, are large and impressive: they often are inscribed on one large monolithic pillar of local stone that measures about five to six feet (1,50 to 1,70 meters) in height and nearly two feet (50 to 60 centimeters) in width; they thus stood about a man’s height and must have weighed more than a ton. Beautiful blocks all over the Mediterranean invited later inhabitants to reuse and recut them—in our case, surprisingly enough, at least two of the blocks are preserved more or less in their entirety. Such impressive inscriptions attracted not only local builders, but also seized the enthusiasm of early travelers (Pamphylia and even more so its mountainous surroundings, Lycia, Pisidia, and Rough Cilicia, opened up to hardy epigraphical travelers only in the later part of the nineteenth century). Often enough, they had to be content with bits and pieces of short and unimpressive funerary inscriptions: here, on the contrary, there were impressive monuments, whose somewhat enigmatic and esoteric character added to the excitement of those men who did not shy away from exertions and adventures that make Indiana Jones look pampered and delicate in comparison. I cannot resist reporting two typical field situations that deeply impressed me,

Augustus to Theodosius (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), 26f.; Hansen (1998), 285f.; see also Grotanelli (2001), 160f. (where he writes about “tableaux mantiques” and “tablette(s),” presumably seduced by the *pinax* in Paus. 7.25.10).

¹⁶ Nollé (1987); more scholarly is the short treatment in Naour (1980), 28-36, commenting on the text from Tyriaion (my no. 13). See also Margherita Guarducci, *Epigrafia Greca IV: Epigrafi sacre pagane e cristiane* (Rome 1978), 105-9, and J. Nollé’s short account of divination in Asia Minor, in *Nürnberger Blätter zur Archäologie* 13 (1996/97): 167-82.

¹⁷ René Lebrun, “Quelques aspects de la divination en Anatolie du Sud-Ouest,” *Kernos* 3 (1990): 185-95, tries to establish traditions going back to the Bronze Age; but there is simply nothing to fill the gap of about 1300 years, and there is no need for it.

an armchair epigrapher. In his early travels through Asia Minor in 1886, John Robert Sitlington Sterrett (1851-1914)—a Bostonian who would become Professor of Greek at Cornell from 1901 until his early death and who was an ardent proponent of epigraphical research in Asia Minor¹⁸—found such an oracular pillar being used to support the main column of the porch of the house of one Mehmet Bey in the small Pisidian town of Tefeny: this annoying re-use resulted in two of the four sides being hidden to the inquiring eye, and—even more annoying—the stone (I cite) “could not be removed without considerable damage to the building.”¹⁹ Of course, you don’t want to antagonize the locals (even Indiana Jones was careful here). But

¹⁸ The praise which the first historian of Cornell heaped upon the recently elected chair of Greek at his University deserves lengthy citation: “Professor J. R. S. Sterrett of Amherst College was elected head of the Greek department, March 23, 1901 [...]. Professor Sterrett had won most distinguished honor by his archaeological exploration of Asia Minor. With rare courage and patience, and almost heroic sacrifice, he had for years conducted expeditions, the object of which had been to discover and translate the ancient inscriptions of this region and to fix the topography of cities, rivers, and states. So valuable were the results attained that Professor Mommsen, in writing his great work on the “Provinces of the Roman Empire”, based his descriptions of the limits of this region largely upon the explorations of Professor Sterrett. The great map, published by the German Government, states that it is based upon Professor Sterrett’s explorations”: Waterman Th. Hewett, *Cornell University: A History* (New York 1905), vol. 2, 12. Most prominent was the 1907-08 Cornell Expedition to Asia Minor and Syria that promised a corpus of Hittite inscriptions, see Sterrett’s report, “The Cornell Expedition to Asia Minor,” *The Nation* 86:22 (Jan. 30, 1908): 100f., and the corpus edited by Benson Brush Charles, *Hittite Inscriptions: Certain Newly Discovered Inscriptions, Together with Revised Copies of a Number of Hitherto Known and Still in situ, Representing the Results of the Cornell Expedition to Asia Minor and the Assyrio-Babylonian Orient* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1911). In several pamphlets, Sterrett fervently advocated more research, see *The Outline of a Plan for the Exploration of Asia Minor, Syria, and the Cyrenaica* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1907); *A Plea for Research in Asia Minor and Syria, Authorized by Men whose High Achievement and Representative Character Make the Project a Call of Humanity at Large for Light in Regard to the Life of Man in the Cradle of Western Civilization* (Ithaca and New York, 1911); and its shorter version, unsuccessfully submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation (presumably in the same year), *A Petition for a Subvention for Research Work in Asia Minor and Parts of Syria*.

¹⁹ J. R. S. Sterrett, “An Epigraphical Journey,” *Papers of the American School at Athens* 2 (1887), under no. 56. Sterrett had already found and published another dice oracle from Anabura as a member of the Wolfe Expedition of 1885, see J. R. S. Sterrett, “The Wolfe Expedition”, *Papers of the American School at Athens* 3 (1888), nos. 339-342 [my no. 1]. On the Wolfe expedition, an archaeological survey expedition to the Ancient Near East in order to prepare a much larger undertaking and financed by Catherine Lorillard Wolfe, a wealthy New York lady, see Bruce Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon: The Ancient Near East and American Intellectual Life 1880-1930* (Princeton 1996), 25f. (I thank Gonzalo Rubio for help and information on this expedition).

since the stone was lying on its side, there was some hope: the intrepid traveler had a hole dug under it in order to be able to look at least at the third side—only, as he goes on, “I was suffering from the fever at the time and could not bear to lie on my stomach with my head in the hole below me.”²⁰ Still, in the end he managed at least to obtain a squeeze of that side—having hastily taught, I imagine, a local boy in the proper use of brush and paper. If, thus, the re-use of a block in a modern settlement created its headaches, it was even worse when the stone was lying around in an abandoned village, as another traveler, the young Oxfordian Henry Arderne Ormerod (1886-1964) was to learn. A student of Queen’s College Oxford who was to become Professor of Greek in Leeds and the Rathbone Professor of Ancient History in Liverpool, he travelled with an Oxford friend, E. S. G. Robinson of Christ Church, the later eminent numismatist; at the time, they both were students at the British School in Athens.²¹ When he arrived, in June 1911, in “the deserted village of Indjik, some six hours to the N.E. of Adalia” (the ancient Attaleia in Pamphylia), he had serious problems: “The paper which I then had, having previously fallen into the Xanthos marshes, prevented me from making reliable impressions, and I only succeeded in copying most of the western face and a part of the southern, before a slight sunstroke compelled me to return to Adalia.”²² When he came back more than a month later, the situation was even worse: attracted by this scholarly activity, some natives had tried to smash up the pillar into sizable (and saleable) pieces, and the friendly nomads who had played host to the lonely Englishman in June had fled from the July sun higher up into the mountains: “The departure of the Yuruks with whom I had stayed on my former visit prevented me from remaining more than one night on the site.”²³ We cannot but guess the adventures of that lonely night out on the Pamphylian plain, in the middle of the ruins of a medieval village and an ancient city that turned out to be none other than Perge, *metropolis*

²⁰ J. R. S. Sterrett, “An Epigraphical Journey,” *ibid.*

²¹ See also their common publication “Inscriptions from Lycia,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 34 (1914): 1-35. Ormerod was admitted to the School for 1909-10 and then readmitted for another year, Robinson for 1910-11, see David Gill, “The British School at Athens,” <http://www.swan.ac.uk/classics/staff/dg/bsa>.

²² H. A. Ormerod, “A new astragalos-inscription from Pamphylia,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 32 (1912): 270-76, at 270 (my no. 2).

²³ *Ibid.* 270.

Pamphyliae. Still, Ormerod had brought a fresh supply of paper with him, and this time he managed to make his squeezes, amidst (I imagine) howling wolves and terrifying ghosts.

Due to these and other early pioneers, in 1912, when Franz Heinevetter defended his doctoral dissertation on Greek and Anatolian dice oracles at the University of Breslau,²⁴ there were eight inscriptions available. In the decades since then, more texts have been published. There are a few more, as Nollé has indicated; thus, pending publication of his corpus,²⁵ the following analysis is somewhat provisional, and I will exclude from my considerations most textual questions, how to understand variations in the single texts, and how these texts were related among each other and to a hypothetical *Urtext*, be it a local inscription or a literary text.²⁶ It is obvious to anyone who reads the editions of these texts that the different local versions vary in many places from each other. In a few cases, we deal simply with faulty earlier restorations that are corrected by more recent finds;²⁷ other differences look like variations due either to inattentive and imaginative copying from or intentional changes of an earlier text;²⁸ in a very few cases, entire verses are different, no doubt intentionally.²⁹ But I think we

²⁴ Heinevetter (1912).

²⁵ The publication is well advanced, as Dr. Nollé kindly informed me.

²⁶ Reasons for such an assumption will emerge in the last part of this contribution.

²⁷ For example oracle XLVI, vs. 4, where the editor of the Marmaria text read as its first word λέων; Termessos (no. 12) then had, albeit with some restoration, the much better αἶθων. Many more cases like this can be spotted between Sitlington Sterrett's edition of the text from Ormeleis (no. 7) and the very close text in Kremna (no. 4).

²⁸ An easy example for a scribal error is the metrically impossible omission of θεοὶ in the Kremna version of oracle IX vs. 5; it did not change the sense. Only marginally more complex is the reading δολόμητις, "of crafty mind" in oracle XXXVII, vs. 2 in Telmessos (no. 12) instead of the widespread δ'ολοὴ νύξ, "the dark night": the latter gives excellent Greek and continues the thought from the first half of the verse, "the sun has set", while the former gives a highly questionable syntax; its readers must have understood "the one with the crafty mind has come," whoever that was. A more complex case can be seen in oracle XII vs. 4 which reads either as τὸν τ' ἐν νοῦσῳ ἐόντα θεοὶ σφῶουσιν ἐτοίμως (Termessos, no. 12) or τὸν τ' ἐπὶ νοῦσῳ ἐόντα θεοὶ σφῶουσιν ἐτοίμως (Marmareis/Saracik, no. 6) ("The gods save/readily the person who is in illness"), whereas Kremna reads [τ]ὸν γε νοῦν σὸν ἐόντα θεοὶ σφῶουσιν ἐτοίμως, a reading that does not yield sense easily: Horsley and Mitchell translate it, not implausibly, as "Gods will readily make safe your actual intention."

²⁹ For example the last verse in oracles XI or 41; see the respective notes in my translation. Such drastic changes do not find an easy explanation.

have to await the publication of the full corpus before we can tackle questions of textual transmission and origins, and they never impinge on my arguments.³⁰

II. *Reading the Texts*

The seventeen texts that we now know fall into three groups of very different size. All texts agree in their structure and in the underlying basic method of consultation, and they all are composed of a sequence of oracles in a typical and standardized structure. There is one main group of thirteen very closely related hexametrical texts; they only differ in some details of the wording. Then, there are three aberrant texts, all fragmentary; they come from the same area, date to the same period, follow the same divinatory procedure and have the same layout as the oracles of the main group. My no. 14,³¹ from Antiochia ad Cragum in Rough Cilicia, follows exactly the same oracular method but has slightly different oracles, partly in iambs, partly in dactyls.³² Numbers 15 and 16 on the other hand agree with each other, but follow a slightly different method and present different texts from no. 14.³³ Furthermore, one of the two texts from Perge, my no. 17, is too damaged to be classified.³⁴ In what follows, I mainly focus on the main family, although some conclusions might be true also for the “dissenters.”

At a first glance, these texts—both of the main family and the dissenters—look very similar. The drawing of the main side of a well-preserved pillar from Lycian Termessos (height 187 cm, width 60 cm, thickness 52 cm, with the back—that is the fourth inscribed side—cut

³⁰ The exception is the provisional translation (Appendix B) where I follow the majority of available texts and indicate major variations in the footnotes.

³¹ See the list in Appendix A.

³² Bean and Mitford (1965) no. 42. On the relationship between this text and the main family see Naour (1980), 35f. who rightly insists on the “fonds commun malgré la diversité des versions”.

³³ *Tituli Asiae Minoris (TAM)* vol. III 1 no. 35.

³⁴ For an attempt at grouping the texts, see Naour (1980), 28f. Up to now, we know of only two texts of such oracles that do not come from the one specific area of Asia Minor with which I am concerned here; both are fragmentary, belong to a very different type, and come from ancient Thrace, modern Bulgaria; they are (1) Unknown provenance (Museum of Sofia); Ernst Kalinka, *Antike Denkmäler in Bulgarien* (Wien 1906), 146 n. 162; (2) Philippopolis: *IGBulg* vol. 3 no. 1474; for Pausanias’ description of the dice oracle in Bura in Achaea, see below at n. 44.

away), can stand for all of them (fig. 1).³⁵ After an initial dedication in larger letters on the front side, there follow twelve blocks of text, all with the same layout, thirteen and fifteen blocks on the two narrow sides respectively, and presumably about as many on the missing last side. The last but one block from bottom on the front side of the Termessos stele (with the lacunae securely supplemented from parallel texts), is typical:

[AA]AςΔ ΙΓ Ἀφροδείτης
 Τρεῖς χεῖροι καὶ ἐξείτης καὶ τέσσαρα πένπτος·
 στέλλε ὅπου χρήξεις· χαίρων εἰς οἶκον ἀ[φίξη]
 εὐρὼν καὶ πράξας ὅσσα φρεσὶ σαῖσι μενοῖ[νᾶς].
 Κύπρις γὰρ φιλέει σε, Διὸς θυγάτηρ φιλομειδή[ς].

Leaving first aside the first line, the text thus reads:

Three chians and a six and the fifth a four: Sail wherever you wish; you will return full of joy, for you have found and accomplished everything that you are cherishing in your mind. Cypris likes you, the daughter of Zeus who likes to smile.

Χεῖροι in the second line gives the game away: χῆος is the technical term for a throw with an *astragalos* that is worth one point.³⁶ The line thus describes a throw of five *astragaloi* (or five throws with one *astragalos*)—three ones, a six and a four. It is now easy to recognize these five numerals in the first line to the left, with their sum—13—following; the combination or the sum or both, then, are correlated to Aphrodite—they are, as the genitive implies, “of Aphrodite.” The three final hexameters talk about the future that the addressee obviously wished: a sea voyage from which he would successfully return. Thus, the text explains how a specific throw of five *astragaloi*—or five consecutive throws of one *astragalos*—should be read as an oracle. As the combination of the texts shows, there were 56 oracular texts on each pillar; they were arranged according to the sum in an ascending way, from 5 (five times one—one being the lowest throw) to 30 (five times six—six being the highest throw). 56 is the number of possible

³⁵ TAM III 1 no.34 (my no. 12), from where the drawing comes. Even better preserved is the text from Kremna (my no. 4): it has all four sides, with only side one somewhat damaged; see Horsley and Mitchell (2000), 22 no. 5, with plate 7b (p. 37).

³⁶ See LSJ s.v.; ordinarily, it is the worst throw, as opposed to the Κῶτος, the best one.

combinations of five *astragaloi*, if the sequence of the single *astragaloi* is irrelevant. This irrelevance of the sequence as opposed to the relevance of the single values makes it a bit more likely that the oracle actually used five *astragaloi* thrown at the same time rather than five consecutive throws of a single *astragalos*.

EXCURSUS ON ASTRAGALOI AND ASTRAGOLOMANCY *Astragaloi* are the cut-off knuckle bones of sheep—or their imitation in bronze, wood, or ivory—that in Greece served as dice, albeit four-sided ones, in opposition to the ordinary, six-sided κύβος (cube). The difference between the two types of dice results from their different shapes: while the cube is a regular geometrical body with six square sides, the *astragalos* is a product of nature with all its irregularities. It is oblong; two of its sides are rounded, with the effect that no *astragalos* would ever land on it, four sides were more or less flat: there were two narrow and two broad sides. One of the narrow sides was flat, the other one concave, while one of the broad sides was concave, the other one convex. These four sides alone counted: they were assigned the values 1, 3, 4 and 6 in a way that the sum of two opposed sides added up to seven, as on our cubic dice: the convex broad side counted 4 (πράνης), the concave one 3 (ὑπτιος); the flat narrow side was six (κῶτιος), the concave one counted one (χῖος). Unlike the regular six-sided cubic dice, *astragaloi* offered varying chances that a given side would turn up.³⁷

Oracles with *astragaloi* are a Greek variation of the much wider phenomenon of dice-oracles; they are cross-culturally widespread, and they are closely related to lot oracles.³⁸ Divination relies on ran-

³⁷ On the names and its origins see the scholion on Plato *Lysis* (*Scholion Platonica*, W. C. Greene, ed. [Haverford 1938], 456f.); Hesychius and Pollux ss.vv.

³⁸ See Cic. *De div.* 2.85 *quid enim sors est? idem propemodum quod micare, quod talos iacere, quod tesseras, quibus in rebus temeritas et casus, non ratio nec consilium valet.* “What is a lot? About the same thing as to play morra [“guess the total number of fingers held up by oneself and one’s opponent” OLD s.v. *mico*] or to throw dice; all these things are ruled by coincidence and chance, not by planning and rationality.” The standard account still is Bouché-Leclercq (1879-1882), vol. 1, 189-97 (Greece); vol. 4, 145-59 (Italy). Lot oracles were especially common in Italy, see Jacqueline Champeaux, “Sors oraculi: Les oracles en Italie sous la République et l’Empire,” *Mélanges de l’Ecole Française de Rome: Antiquité* 102 (1990): 271-302; ead., “Sors et divination inspirée: Pour une préhistoire des oracles italiens,” *Mélanges de l’Ecole Française de Rome: Antiquité* 102 (1990): 801-28; ead., “Sorts antiques et médiévaux: Les lettres et les chiffres,” in *Au miroir de la culture antique: Mélanges offerts au Président René Marache par ses collègues, ses*

domization as its fundamental logical step.³⁹ into a chain of human causality, it introduces a gap where the hand and mind of the divinity can interfere: casting the dice is the randomizing opening in the process, as is drawing the lot. Lot oracles basically function according to two systems that differ in the amount of randomization: either one draws a lot that contains in itself the oracular text (like Chinese fortune cookies), or one inserts a mediating element between the advisee and the oracular text. This mediation can be manifold: in the sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste, the lots were drawn by a boy whose hand was guided by Fortuna, as Cicero has it;⁴⁰ in Chinese *qian* divination, one shakes a container filled with bamboo sticks until a single stick emerges further than the others and thus points toward a given text.⁴¹ One could also introduce more randomization: again in the Chinese *qian*, after having selected the bamboo stick, the advisee threw the so-called “divining blocks” in order to determine whether the choice really was valid. These blocks are objects somewhat comparable to the *astragaloi* insofar as they functioned as dice with reduced possibilities: divining blocks were flat on one side, round on the other, thus they were basically two-sided dice, and again one used several blocks together. In dice oracles, it is the throwing of the dice—or the *astragaloi*—that introduces randomization, and the hand of god that

étudiants et ses amis (Rennes 1992), 67-89; in Graeco-Roman Egypt, three cubic dice were used in the Homeric oracles, F. Maltomini, “P.Lond. 121 (= PGM VII), 1-221: Homeromanteion,” *ΣPE* 106 (1995): 107-122 (with the earlier bibliography). A more cross-cultural approach in Federica Cordano and Cristiano Grottanelli, eds., *Sorteggio pubblico e cleromanzia dall’antichità all’età moderna. Atti della Tavola Rotonda, Università degli Studi di Milano, Dipartimento di Scienza dell’antichità, 26-27 gennaio 2000* (Milano 2001), where for Greece see Grottanelli (2001), 155-95; on the relationship between divination and sortition as a means to select officials in Rome, see Sarah Iles Johnston, “Lost in the Shuffle: Roman Sortition and its Discontents,” *ARG* 5 (2003): 146-56.

³⁹ For randomization in Greek divination, see Lisa Maurizio, “Anthropology and Spirit Possession: A Reconsideration of the Pythia’s Role at Delphi,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995): 69-86; and Sarah Iles Johnston, “Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination,” *Arethusa* 34 (2001): 97-117, at 109-13; both refer back to E. M. Ahern, *Chinese Ritual and Politics* (Cambridge 1981).

⁴⁰ Cic. *De div.* 2.86 *quae Fortuna monitu pueri manu miscentur atque ducuntur* “lots that the hand of a boy mixes and draws, guided by Fortuna”. More instances in Cristiano Grottanelli, “Bambini e divinazione. 7: Cledonomanzia con bambini,” in: Ottavio Niccoli, ed., *Infanzie* (Florence 1993), 52-57, and Sarah Iles Johnston, *l.c.* (preceding note).

⁴¹ Richard J. Smith, *Fortune-Tellers and Philosophers: Divination in Traditional Chinese Society* (Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford 1991), 236.

determines the outcome. The result of the throw—an abstract symbolical configuration—then has to undergo interpretation, either by a human specialist or—as in our case or in the case of the Chinese *qian*—by a set text; this explains the connection between dice oracles and lot oracles in all ancient sources.⁴² But even the existence of a set text did not necessarily dispense with the need for a human interpreter, as at least the practice of *qian* shows.⁴³

Oracles that make use of *astragaloi* are rare enough in Greece for Pausanias to explain the function of the one he came across in his travels, in Bura in Achaia:

When one descends from Bura towards the sea, there is the Buraikos river and a not large image of Herakles in a grotto; he too is called Buraikos, and he offers an oracle from a list (πίναξ) and from astragaloi. Whoever intends to consult the divinity, prays in front of the image, and after the prayer, he takes up four astragaloi (plenty of them are lying around Herakles) and rolls them on the table. For any combination of the astragaloi, the inscription in the list gives an easily accessible explanation of the combination.⁴⁴

This description contains the two main elements that make this type of oracle function: *astragaloi*, and a list of answers. Pausanias' list is lost, but in the Anatolian inscriptions, we possess an entire set of them; we just have to add the several *astragaloi* that were thrown, the combination of which led to the answer.

This leads us back to the main topic. On all our monuments, the 56 oracular texts are arranged in the same manner. The guiding principle is the sum of the throws: the series always starts with the lowest number (5 as the result of 5 times one) and ends with the largest one (30 from 5 times six). Where several combinations result in the same sum—say 14 as the result of 1+3+3+3+4, of 1+1+3+3+6 and of 1+1+4+4+4—these combinations are arranged according to the

⁴² E.g. Cic. *De div.* 2.89 or scholion on Pind. *Pyth.* 4.338 (below, n. 44).

⁴³ Smith (1991), 238.

⁴⁴ Paus. 7.25.10. The scholiasts on Pind. *Pyth.* 4.338 (on the seer Mopsus who used bird omens and lots) overgeneralize this use, obviously with hazy knowledge only: (a) ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἀστράγαλοι κείνται, οἷς διαμαντεύονται βάλλοντες αὐτούς “there are astragaloi in the sanctuaries with which they take oracles by throwing them”, or (b) ἦσαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τραπέζων ἀστράγαλοι, οἷς ῥίπτοντες ἐμαντεύοντο, “there were astragaloi on the sacred tables [in the sanctuaries, see David Gill, *Greek Cult Tables* (New York and London 1991)] with which they used to take oracles by throwing them”; neither text tells how the advisee arrived at an answer from casting the *astragaloi*.

sides of the *astragalos*, beginning with the concave narrow side (value 1) and ending with the flat broad side (value 4). This further clarifies the method of consultation: after having thrown the five astragaloi, one added up their sum and consulted the inscription to find one's specific sum or, if several combinations resulted in the same sum, one's specific combination. Given the wide range of possible combinations, it is the easiest and fastest system of reference—provided one was able to perform very basic addition.⁴⁵

The third element in the first line is a divine name, at least in most of the oracles of the main group and in the one dissenting text from Antiocheia in Cilicia (my no. 14). This divine name, in the genitive, stands at the turning point between the throw and the oracle, and the genitive points in both directions: it is either “the throw of a given divinity” or “the oracle of a given divinity” or both at the same time. In the use of *astragaloi* in games—where usually four *astragaloi* were used—the connection of a specific throw with a divinity is well-known insofar as the best throw—each of the four *astragaloi* showing a different side—was the one of Aphrodite, the *iactus Venerius*.⁴⁶ But in the game, this use of divine names was not systematized: the worst throw, four ones, was either the $\chi\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$ (see above) or the $\kappa\upsilon\nu\omega\pi\acute{o}\varsigma$, “the dog's throw.” The system of the game—played especially by children—is thus different from the oracles, both as to the systematic use of divine names and as to the evaluation of the points; the game's conventions are very general parallels at best.⁴⁷

This difference is clear from the start. The first divinity—associated with five ones, the equivalent of the $\kappa\upsilon\nu\omega\pi\acute{o}\varsigma$ —always is Zeus: he is Zeus Olympios in the main group, and is the local Zeus Lamotes in Antiochia ad Cragum (no. 14); this statistically rare throw is given prominence by association with Zeus, “with whom everything has to begin,” and the oracle, being the one of Zeus, is favorable: the equivalent of the dog's throw is not negative at all. Then, the sequence defies easy understanding: the second divinity—7, from 4 times 1 plus 3—is Athena Areia, next come the Moirai, then the Eagle of Zeus,

⁴⁵ Since the first hexameter describes the throw again, it could be regarded as superfluous and was left out in some inscriptions.

⁴⁶ Lucian *Amat.* 16.

⁴⁷ For an attempt to theorize the relationship between oracles and games of chance see Dario Sabbatucci, “Gioco d'azzardo rituale,” *Studi e Materiali di Storia della Religione* 35 (1964): 23-86.

Daimon Megistos, Tyche Eudaimonousa, two forms of Nike (Nike and Nike Hilara), Asklepios and so on. There are virtually no correlations between the divinity and the shape of the throw: some divinities appear more than once, as does Nike—there is another Tyche, Tyche Kybernousa, there are Zeus Kataibates, Zeus Keraunios, Zeus Ktesios, Zeus Katachthonios; twice we have the same simple Aphrodite (13 from $1+1+1+6+4$ and 27 from 4 times 6 plus 3), but in neither case does the sequence correspond to the *iactus Venerius* of the game. Often, the association with the future is obvious, as in the several Nikai, Tychai and Moirai; the eagle of Zeus as well as Zeus Kataibates and Zeus Keraunios have their connection with *omina*, since both Zeus' bird and Zeus' lightning are signs from the god. Rarely, there is a connection with the throw, as in the first, Zeus Olympios. The second but last throw—four times 6 plus 4—is, in a way, the most annoying throw you can make because you barely miss the maximum, five times six: no wonder that it was associated with Blabē, Damage—a near miss is much more frustrating than a wide one, as winners of Olympic silver medals are only too painfully aware.

Most of the time, it is somewhat easier to connect the divinities with the oracles, the other direction to which the genitives point. In some cases, the text spells out the connection between divine name and the oracle. The first oracle, of Zeus Olympios, is favorable, “because Zeus will give good counsel to your mind;” likewise the second, of Athena, since “the blue-eyed goddess Athena will give it to you”—although she is Athena Areia, the warlike goddess. Zeus' eagle shows that “you will achieve it with the help of Zeus, thundering high up;” the oracle of Aphrodite is favorable “because Kypriis loves you, Zeus' daughter who delights in smiles.” Personifications, too, speak for themselves: the oracle of Blabē, Damage, has to be thoroughly unfavorable, while all Nike oracles are as favorable as the one of Elpis Agathē, Good Hope. In a few cases, the connection rests on an association: the oracle labelled as the one of Helios Phosphoros, Bringer of Light, promises “you will find the invisible thing, you will meet the saving day,” and the one of Poseidon warns its recipient “to throw seed grain into the sea and to write letters (on its surface) is both vain toiling and an impossible task:” Helios, light, day and salvation are a semantic cluster in Greek thinking from Homer onwards, while Poseidon's element is the key to the two images for vain toils.

Sometimes, the association rests on myth or cult: it is to be expected that the oracles of Kronos the Child Eater (τεκνοφάγος) and of Sub-

terranean Zeus (Καταχθόνιος) are unfavorable: myth depicts child-eating Kronos as a villain, and Zeus Katachthonios comes close to Hades, the hated Lord of the Dead who receives no cult. But some cases look more opaque than this. The text gives no hint as to why, of the two forms of Zeus connected with lightning, Zeus Keraunios is thoroughly unfavorable while Zeus Kataibates⁴⁸ is favorable, or why Nemesis discourages from business but promises healing from illness. Here another diviner, Artemidorus of Daldis, steps in: "Some point out," he says, "that Nemesis turns good things into bad, bad ones into good."⁴⁹ In the case of Zeus' lightnings, the lightning of Zeus Kataibates makes a spot sacred, while Zeus Keraunios strikes and destroys—or, as again Artemidorus has it, when he talks about the ambivalence of lightning in dreams: "Lightning makes unimportant places important because of the altars built and the sacrifices offered there, but it makes rich and fertile regions empty and deserted, because no one wants to stay there anymore,"⁵⁰ although Artemidorus rejects *astragalomanteis* as *pseudomanteis*, the oracles and the interpreter of dream seem to share a common system of symbols.⁵¹

In semantic terminology, the numbers thrown are the signifiers, while the divine names are the signified; but they then turn into signifiers that point to an oracle as the ultimate signified. This ambivalent function of the divine names explains why at least in one oracle, they are left out altogether: the tripartite semantic chain is reduced to the signifying *astragaloí* and the signified oracle. But what is the connection between the three in native Greek terms? It is immediately obvious that the oracle is not given by the respective divinity: the voice of the oracle talks in the third person about the divinity—"Zeus will give good counsel to your mind;" "Kypris loves you;" "honor Athena, and everything will come to you." Neither does the divinity simply denote a specific constellation of throws, as we saw—if that were true, we would not have several throws associated with the same divinity. If

⁴⁸ A variant attested in Termessos (no. 12) only; the other texts have Zeus and Athena.

⁴⁹ Artemidor. *Onir.* 2.37 p. 171,11 Pack.—On Artemidoros, see the recent accounts by Simon Price, "The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidorus," *Past & Present* 113 (1986): 3-37; Glen W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley 1994), 80-88; and especially Christine Walde, *Antike Traumdeutung und moderne Traumforschung* (Düsseldorf 2001), 144-199.

⁵⁰ Artemidor. *Onir.* 2.9 p. 110,20 Pack.

⁵¹ Artemidor. *Onir.* 2.69; he shares the feeling with Cicero, *De div.* 2.85.

the divine name thus neither denotes the origin of the oracular words nor serves as a simple classification of throws, the divinity must have another function: I would guess that it is he or she who guides the throwing hand and leads to an oracle that makes this specific divinity the main momentary influence. One of the oracles of Aphrodite confirms this guess [LIV 3]:

The daughter of Ouranos, Aphrodite, the mighty mistress of the Erotes, sends a good oracle, she will grant travel to you.

οὐρανόπαις Ἀφροδείτη, Ἐρώτων πότνι' ἄνασσα,
πέμψει μαντείαν ἀγαθήν, δώσει δὲ ὁδόν σοι.

From afar, it reminds me of the astrological concept that specific moments in time are dominated by a specific divine influence—but our oracles do not deal with planetary gods but with a vast array of cultic and mythological divinities and personifications, and not with days or hours but with specific enterprises or problems.⁵²

III. *Hearing the Voice*

When looking even closer at these texts, I do so with the help of the most basic instruments of narratological analysis, succinctly formulated by Umberto Eco in some memorable pages of his Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1992: every text constructs its implied narrator and its implied reader.⁵³ The implied narrator of our oracles speaks in the first person singular, and he addresses a reader whom he sees as interacting with him, as many details show.

The voice of the narrator addresses an enquirer who came from another place; he is regularly addressed as “stranger” (ξένος) [e.g. I 2, XXXIV 3, XXXV 2]. This stranger is engaged in business or intends to do so—“the business that you undertake” (πρᾶξις ἢν πράσσεις [III 2]), “the business for which you set out” (ἐφ’ ἣν ὁρμᾶς πρᾶξιν) [IV 4], “the business that you intend to bring to an end” (τὴν πρᾶξιν

⁵² For the specific days and hours see Franz Boll and Carl Bezold, *Stern glauben und Sterndeutung: Die Geschichte und das Wesen der Astrologie*, W. Gundel, ed. (Leipzig and Berlin 1931), 175-83.

⁵³ Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994). Originally published in Italian as *Sei passeggiate nei boschi narrativi* (Milan 1994).

ἦν βούλει νῦν ἀνύειν σύ) [VI 2]; “what you turn around in your mind” (κατὰ νοῦν ἃ μεριμνᾷς) [V 3, cp. XI 3]: he thus is addressed in very specific circumstances (νῦν). He either silently or openly has declared his projects to the oracle—“sail wherever you wish” (στέλλε ὅπου χρήζεις) [XI 2, cp. XLVIII 2 στέλλε ὅπου σοι θυμός], “you will receive what you wish” (ὃ χρήζεις ἀπολήμνη) [XXXIV 4]; “you will do whatever you want” (πράξεις ὅσσα θέλεις) [XLII 2]. Thus, the text constructs the standard situation of an inquirer who has come from the outside to an oracle, put his desires as questions to the god, and now receives an answer: “You will find that for which you are consulting the oracle, and nothing will be bad” (εὐρήσεις δ’ ὅσα μαντεύη καὶ οὐθέν σοι κακὸν ἔσται) [XXXV 4]; “you will get everything about which you are asking” (πάντ’ ἔσται σοι ὅσ’ ἐπερωτᾷς) [LII 4]; “you came upon a good oracle” (μαντεῖαν ἀγαθὴν ἔπι εἶ) [XXXVI 2]; once, the text directly states: “Enter and receive the voice” (εἰσαφικοῦ ... φθόνγον δεχοῦ) [XXV 2]. Often, the answer is positive, as in these cases, and sometimes, the voice adds the comforting admonitions: “Fear not” (θάρσει) [LI 2] or “don’t be afraid” (μηθὲν δὲ φοβηθῆς [IV 4], μηδὲ φοβοῦ [XXXIII 3]). But there can be also discouraging answers:

Don’t do the business that you are engaged in; it will not turn out well

πράξιν ἦν πράσσεις μὴ πράσσε· οὐ γὰρ ἄμεινον [III 2];

or:

Do not yet make haste; it is impossible to go, rather wait;
if you set out mindlessly, you will do great damage to yourself

μήπω σπεῦδε μολεῖν οὐκ ἔστ’, ἀλλ’ ἐπίμεινον·
εἰ δὲ κενοσπούδως χρήσῃ, σαντὸν μέγα βλάβεις [X 3]⁵⁴

or even, in a threatening image:

The sun has gone down, and terrible night has come.⁵⁵
Everything has become dark: interrupt the matter, about which you ask me

⁵⁴ Termessos (no. 12) presents, as often, a somewhat different text; in this case, however, it might be due more to problems of the stone.

⁵⁵ For this reading and the questions arising from it, see above n. 28 and below, n. 88.

ἡέλιός τε δέδυκεν, ἐφέστηκεν δ' ὅλῳ νύξ·
πάντα ἀμαυροῦται· παῦσαι, περὶ ὧν μ' ἐπερωτᾷς [XXXVII 2f.].

The oracular voice knows more than humans would. It knows superhuman beings will be helpful or damaging—not only “Kypris loves you” [XI 4], but also “the blue-eyed goddess Athene will give it to you” (δώσει σοι θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη) [II 3] or “Demeter and Zeus will be your saviors” (Δημήτηρ γάρ σοι καὶ Ζεὺς σωτῆρες ἔσονται) [V 4]. Sometimes, the divinity is described simply as a *daimôn*—“a *daimôn* will guide you towards everything” (δαίμων γὰρ ὁδηγήσει πρὸς ἅπαντας) [XXXIII 3, Elpis Agathē, and XLI 3, Demeter], or: “a *daimôn* will make you honored and you will overcome your enemies” (τειμητόν δ' ἐτίθει σε δαίμων ἐχθρῶν τε κρατήσεις) [VII 3, Nike]—I leave it open whether it is an undefined divine force or a specific deity. At any rate, the divine helper is not always clear, as the plural “the gods” shows: “the gods save him who is ill” or “you who are ill” [VI 3, VIII 3, XII 3], “a god will be your helper” (συνλήμπωρ θεὸς ἔσται) [XXXVI 3]—but also:

being mortal, do not force a god who will damage you

μηδὲ βιάζου θνητὸς ἐὼν θεὸν ὃς σέ τι βλάψει [XLV 4].

In some cases, the voice also prescribes prayers or sacrifices as a condition of success: “Placate Aphrodite and the son of Maia” (Ἀφροδείτην εἰλάσκου καὶ Ματιάδος υἱόν) [I 4], “Honor Pallas Athena” (Παλλάδ' Ἀθηναίην τείμα) [XLVII 2]; “it will be better for you to fulfill whatever vow you made to the daimon” (δαίμονι ἦντιν' ἔχεις εὐχὴν ἀπόδοντι σοι ἔσται βελτίον) [V 2f.]. Given all this superhuman knowledge, it doesn't come as a surprise when the speaker of the voice has more than human vision: “I do not see this plan as safe for you” (οὐ σοι ὁρῶ βουλὴν τήνδε ἀσφαλῆ—where the verb is more than just an expression of an opinion, as the English “I see”) [XXXI 2], or simply: “I see something hostile to you” (ἐχθρὸν γάρ σοι ὁρῶ) [LVI 3].

Ordinarily, the answers are pretty straightforward. Sometimes, however, they make use of less common images, especially when discouraging the inquirer. We already heard the warning that began with “The sun has set” [XXXVII 2]; but there is more. “Stay home and do not go elsewhere, lest a terrible monster and an avenging *daimôn* approach you” [L 2f.]; “do not make haste ... but wait, not like the bitch (or “the lion”) that gave birth to a blind puppy” [XXII 2]; “There will come a fiery large lion of whom you have to beware” [XLVI 3];

or even: “Do not put your hand into the mouth of a wolf, lest you suffer some damage” [XLIV 2]. Warnings have to be more forceful than consent in order to achieve their goal, and oracles sometimes use images. The implied speaker is not only gifted with superhuman knowledge, but with sound psychological insight.

The implied consultant constructed by the text, in his turn, is a person given to active business undertakings and often enough to foreign travel—but also a person worrying about the health of himself and those close to him, and (however rarely) about other private affairs. A chance commentary in one of the oracles (XXXVI 2) makes it clear, by the way, that he must have read his oracle aloud once he had found it: “You pronounce a good oracle, stranger” (μαντείαν ἀγαθὴν ἐνέπεις, ὦ ξένε) [XXXVI 2]. The human voice of the addressee stands in for the divine voice that was recorded on the stone. “If you go abroad for a while, nothing untoward will happen to you” [III 4]; also, obviously about a missing friend or relative who departed a while ago: “the god announces that the one who is wandering abroad will return home” [XLIII 4]—but also, less encouraging, as we heard: “Stay home and do not go elsewhere, lest a terrible monster and an avenging *daimôn* approach you” [L 2f.]. Sometimes, the use of business language is obvious. “Stay quiet, keep away from travel and business transactions (ἀγορασμός)” [XLIV 4]; “you will not perceive yourself buying, nor will it be helpful” [XXX 4]. The connection between foreign travel and gain again underlies this world of merchants even where the text is somewhat vague: “Travel to wherever you wish: joyful, you will return home, for you have found and accomplished everything that you ponder in your mind” [XI 2]—but also: “There is a road, painful, impossible, and not to be approached: to buy is difficult, to sell will bring loss” [LIII 3]—an additional instance of clear commercial language: ὠνεῖσθαι χαλεπὸν καὶ πωλεῖν τι βλάβος ἔσται. Illness appears less often among the answers and thus among the problems asked about, but it must be a cause of anguish, both as illness of the addressee and of relatives and friends: “The god announces that he will save the person who is laboring under a disease” [IX 3, Asklepios] is ambiguous; “you will get away from difficult illness” [XLIII 2] or “she will ... save the sick person” [XLVII 4] seem more unambiguously focussed. There is, however, a noticeable difference in incidence between different locations as to this topic: several answers that, in the stone from the agora of Termessos (no. 12), talk about illness, in other places present a different wording by simply replacing νοῦσον “illness”

with νοῦν σόν, “your intention.”⁵⁶ Other private, non-commercial matters are virtually absent, with the sole exception of marriage, and even this only once: “you will marry and return home safely” [XXV 3]. Marriage thus becomes almost a side-effect of commercial travel, as it must have happened sometimes, and not only in antiquity.⁵⁷

One has to tread carefully, however. The texts are not always as specific as we would hope for: they have to offer an open formulation that the recipient then could read as pertaining to his own problem: the art of constructing a set text (like a contemporary newspaper horoscope) consists in offering enough semantic gaps to open up room for negotiation between the inquirer with his very specific problem, and the answer that is written down and, therefore, cannot explain itself further. “Whatever you ponder in your mind,” ὅσα φρεσὶ σαῖσι μενοινᾶς, or “whatever you wish,” ὅσα χρήξεις / θέλεις / βούλει are empty formulae that can easily be filled in. More artful than this are words that offer such a gap, such as the omnipresent terms πρᾶξις, “business,” and its cognates. “Don’t do the business that you are about to do,” πρᾶξιν ἣν πράσσεις μὴ πρᾶσσε [III 2], or “Do the entire business,” τὴν πρᾶξιν πᾶσαν πρᾶσσε [VIII 2], can be taken as a very open term as well, but it is not necessarily so: πρᾶξις, in Hellenistic and later Greek, very often means “business” in the concrete sense of “an economic transaction.” And since commercial language is very present in all our texts, this frame of reference might be more important than it looks.

But a sole focus on commerce (and commercial travelling) and on illness appears somewhat surprising, if one looks at other oracles that lent themselves especially to private matters. Travelling is important at Dodona too, but in addition, Dodona is consulted regarding all sorts of personal and of relationship problems, not the least regarding marriage and childbirth.⁵⁸ Even more varied are the topics addressed

⁵⁶ Compare nos. VI and XII in Termessos (no. 12) versus Kremna (no. 4) and Perge (no. 9).

⁵⁷ The texts of Termessos (no. 12) and Perge (no. 9) both contain this promise, but differ in what precedes it: Termessos promises ἔσται ὁ καιρὸς | πλήρης καὶ θαλαμῶν (“the time will also be ripe for marriage”, a rather daring translation by Horsley and Mitchell), Perge has σ]οὶ ἔσται ὁ καιρὸς | [πλήρης καὶ θ]άλλων, which is much better Greek and must represent the text from which Termessos developed its version.

⁵⁸ For an overview, see Marguerita Guarducci, *Epigrafia Greca. 4: Epigrafi Sacre Pagane e Cristiane* (Rome 1978), 82-87; for an aspect relevant for our topic also François Salviat,

in the *Sortes Sangallenses*, an oracle collection that must have originated in fourth-century southern Gaul (thus at a time closer to our oracles than the Dodona texts): commercial transactions are rare; marriage and especially problems of inheritance are important, as are questions of public service and the dangers of litigation: about one sixth of all oracles are concerned with this tricky topic (see also the contribution of W. Klingshirn in this volume).⁵⁹

IV. *Placing the Monuments*

But who is the speaker of this voice, and why is business so important? It is time to enlarge our vision again by having a second look at the monuments, their place and their function. Given the size and quality of the freestanding pillars and their attraction for later builders, it should not be surprising that only one was found more or less *in situ*: the stone from Kremna stood on the west side of the agora on the lowest of the impressive flight of steps that led up to the west colonnade, on a spot where the next step was interrupted to make room for it: it thus was very deliberately integrated into a major structure of the agora.⁶⁰ A second stele was found not far from a sanctuary inside the town of Termessos, practically unbroken;⁶¹ given its weight, it could not have been moved much. But more important than this guess is its dedicatory inscription. It had been dedicated by a former *agoranomos*:

Τβημης Τροκόνδου Θό(αντος) προ(βούλου)
Μολεους δις Ἰάσονος
ἀγορανομήσ[ας ἀνέστη]-
σεν.

“Timodamos et son gaulois: Oracles et marchands à Dodone,” in Pierre Cabanes, ed., *L’Illyrie méridionale et l’Épire dans l’antiquité 2*, Actes du 2e colloque internationale de Clermont-Ferrand (25–27 octobre 1990) (Paris 1993), 61–64.

⁵⁹ A. Dold and R. Meister, *Die Orakelsprüche im St. Galler Palimpsestcodex 908 (Die sogenannten “Sortes Sangallenses”)*, Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 224:4 (Wien 1948), 11–14. More on the *Sortes Sangallenses* see below, n. 93.

⁶⁰ Horsley and Mitchell (2000), 22.35 (my no. 4). The stele was re-erected on its spot during the rescue excavations in the late 1960s.

⁶¹ TAM I no. 34 (my no. 12).

Tbenes, son of Trokondas the *proboulos*, grandson of Moles, greatgrandson and thrice grandson of Iason, dedicated this after having served as *agoranomos*.

Such dedications at the end of the term of office are quite common, and when they come from an *agoranomos*, they are usually displayed in the agora, or in a precinct closely connected to it. Another monument—not a pillar this time—is also connected with the agora. On the agora of Pisidian Anabura, two large concave slabs with seven oracles each were arranged between two pillars that carried the names of members of one of the leading families, forming an exedra that had the shape of a quarter circle (no. 1). Since these fourteen oracles are exactly a fourth of the fifty-six we would expect, it is easy to reconstruct a circular monument, composed by four such exedrae with two pillars and two oracular slabs each. Already Sittlington Sterrett, who found the stones, arrived at this reconstruction, and from his local knowledge, he could also point out that such monuments were very common in Anabura.⁶² One of the leading families thus had a monument erected in the agora that contained, besides the honorary inscriptions to themselves, the oracles as well.⁶³ Another text, in Antiochia ad Cragum in Rough Cilicia (no. 14), came from the still unexcavated ruins of a temple,⁶⁴ as does a text inscribed on the doorposts of a building “adjacent to a temple” in Sagalassos in Pisidia (no. 10).⁶⁵ In another case, again in Termessos, the text—this time a different text, for the use of seven *astragaloï* (no. 16)—was inscribed on the inside of the city wall, close to one of the gates.⁶⁶ One of the texts from Perge, finally, was inscribed on marble slabs belonging to the theatre (no. 8): they were part of the monumental fountain that formed the city side of the scene building;⁶⁷ the other

⁶² J.R.S. Sterrett, “The Wolfe Expedition,” *Papers of the American School at Athens* 3 (1888), 206 (“a kind of building much *en vogue* in Anabura”).

⁶³ Georg Kaibel, “Inchriften aus Pisidien,” *Hermes* 23 (1888): 538-41, gives some prosopographical notes.

⁶⁴ Bean and Mitford (1965), no. 42.

⁶⁵ Karl Graf Lanckoroński, *Städte Pamphyliens und Pisidiens. 2: Pisidien* (Wien 1892), 139.

⁶⁶ *TAM* III 1 no. 35.

⁶⁷ See the discussion by Sencer Şahin, *Die Inschriften von Perge I. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* 54 (Bonn 1999), 245 ad no. 206. The two fragments from Laodikeia (my no. 5) were similarly inscribed on marble slabs; there are no indications about the archaeological context.

Pergaeon text might have been erected at some point along its monumental main street.⁶⁸

Thus, among the eight texts about whose locations we know something, only one or two come from sanctuaries, five or six seem connected with the public space of agora or city gates. The dedication of another well-preserved block—from Marmareis in Eastern Lycia (no. 6)—also leads to the agora: the list of oracles again is preceded by a dedication. The first line is missing, then the text runs:

[—]
 Ἑρμοῦ Ἑρμαῖος Ἐπικ[—]
 τόν τε Ἑρμῆν καὶ τὰ περὶ αὐτ[όν].

— of Hermes. Hermaios son of Epik[—] dedicated at his own expenses
 [—] the Hermes and what is around it.⁶⁹

The block thus seems to be connected with Hermes, the divinity of the marketplace; dedications of *agoranomoi* at the end of their term most often are addressed to Hermes, the god of commerce.⁷⁰ In Marmareis, either the pillar itself⁷¹ is called a Hermes, or it supported a statue of the god, or both. Two pillars, the one from the Termessian agora with very similar dimensions whose top is well preserved, and the one, again with similar dimensions, from Kremna in Pamphylia,⁷² show the traces of a standing image; it is easy again to assume the statue of a standing Hermes, dedicated by the outgoing *agoranomos*.⁷³ If this favors the interpretation that every pillar supported a statue of Hermes, the oracle associated with the highest throw—five sixes—points to an identification of pillar and Hermes: the best throw belonged to Hermes Tetragnonos, “Hermes with Four Angles.” At least in the case of the pillars, they are Hermai, representations of the god that can, at the same time, support a less aniconic image of the same

⁶⁸ Ibid. 243, ad no. 205; though fragmentary, it is still large (height 40 cm, width 51 cm, thickness 63 cm) and cannot have been moved too far from its findspot.

⁶⁹ TAM II 3 no. 1222.

⁷⁰ Lewis Richard Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States*, vol. 4 (Oxford 1909), 26. 68f.; more recent inscriptions did not change the picture.

⁷¹ Dimensions: height 165 cm, width 66 cm, thickness 65 cm.

⁷² Nollé (1987), 41-49, figs. 3 (detail of the text, oracles nos. XX-XXII) and 5; Horsley and Mitchell (2000), 22 no. 5, with plate 7a.

⁷³ Rudolph Heberdey, “Zu den kleinasiatischen Astragalarakeln,” *Wiener Studien* 50 (1930): 82-95.

god. The Latin dedication below the top of the stele from Kremna shows this ambivalence:

*Mandatu L. Fabrici Longi Vibia
Tatia uxor eius et Fabricia Lu-
[cilla]a f. et heres Mercu-
rium [dedicav]e-
runt.*

Following the injunction of L. Fabricius Longus, his wife Vibia Tatia and his daughter and heir Fabricia Lucilla dedicated Mercurius.⁷⁴

Together with the pillars (or the rotunda), the builders would have provided a flat surface close by where the *astragaloi* could be cast, presumably a table (most pillars are too high to use their tops for this purpose), and perhaps also a container of *astragaloi* (if you did not bring your own); these are “the things around the Hermes” mentioned on the pillar from Marmareis (no. 6). The circular monument in the agora of Anabura (no. 1) enclosed enough space for a table, and the city wall of Termessos shows, between the oracular texts (no. 16), a stone slab that is protruding, table-like, from the wall below a niche large enough to contain a statue, again presumably of Hermes. Thus, whoever consulted the oracle rolled the *astragaloi* near the pillar, at least sometimes under the eyes of a statue of Hermes.

Hermes, however, is a rather unusual oracular god, who is associated with some minor forms of divination only; scholars generally agree that this function is due more to his association with chance and luck than to any intrinsic divinatory power.⁷⁵ At the end of the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*, his brother Apollo, mockingly and rather contemptuously magnanimous, concedes a lesser form of divination to his brother (“if you accept a human being, he will often listen to your voice, whether he will be successful”);⁷⁶ this has triggered a scholarly debate as to what Apollo meant⁷⁷—in Apollodorus’ *Library*, at least,

⁷⁴ Horsley and Mitchell (2000), l.c.

⁷⁵ Bouché-Leclercq (1879-1882) vol. 2, 397-400 (“quelques oracles de peu de notoriété ou d’existence hypothétique”); Laurence Kahn-Lyotard, *Hermès passe ou les ambiguïtés de la communication* (Paris 1978); Grottanelli (2001), 155-95.

⁷⁶ Hom. *H. Merc.* 565f.

⁷⁷ The problem arises from (a) the unclear meaning of v. 553, specifically the identity of σεμναὶ ... παρθένοι τρεῖς, (b) the contradiction with Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.115 who has Apollo give to Hermes “divination with pebbles (ψῆφοι)”. Some scholars changed the text, most famously Gottfried Hermann, but see Susan Scheinberg, “The Bee Maidens of the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*

Hermes receives divination by lot, ψῆφοι.⁷⁸ The only divinatory epiclesis of Hermes we know of is *Kleêdonios*, thus making him responsible for chance utterances;⁷⁹ a herm in the agora of Pharai in Achaia had the same function, according to Pausanias.⁸⁰ This points less to an intrinsic divinatory power of Hermes than to the auditive equivalent of a ἐρμαῖον, a chance find.⁸¹

Astragaloi have to do with chance and luck—but it is not Hermes' voice we hear in the oracles. One of the oracles, attributed to Apollo Pythios, talks about this voice: “Do not do business, obey the oracles of the Pythian god” (μὴ πράξεις, Φοίβου χρήμοισι δὲ πείθου) [XLIX 2]. Theoretically, this could refer to this single oracle—but then, we would have to disregard the plural. If we take it seriously, it makes Apollo, the oracular god *par excellence*, also into the voice that pronounces these hexameters. Another text confirms this view: oracle XXV invites an addressee to “come and receive the voice from the tripod” ([εἶσα]φικοῦ, ἐκ τρίποδος φθόγγον δέχου).⁸² And a somewhat smaller pillar from Tyriaion on the border between Phrygia, Lycia and Pisidia (no. 13) puts something like a title above the 56 texts:

Χρησμοὶ Ἀπόλλωνος Πυθίου ἐν
πέντ' ἀστράγαλοις εἰς τὸν Ἑρμῆν

Oracles of Apollo Pythios in five *astragaloi*, for Hermes.⁸³

83 (1979): 1-28. Recently, Jennifer Larson, “The Corycian Maidens and the Bee Maidens of the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 36 (1995): 341-57, in an argument that is far from being stringent, defended cleromancy and pointed to the many *astragaloi* in the Corycean Cave, whereas Grottanelli (2001), 164f. advocated inspired divination.

⁷⁸ Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.115 (see preceding note).

⁷⁹ Ph. Le Bas and W. H. Waddington, *Voyage archéologique en Grèce et en Asie Mineure*, vol. 3 (Paris 1874), no. 1724a.

⁸⁰ Paus. 7.22.2f. “In front of the image is a hearth made of stone, with bronze lamps clamped to it with lead. He who would inquire of the god comes at evening and burns incense on the hearth, fills the lamps with oil, lights them, lays a local coin called a copper on the altar to the right of the image, and whispers his question, whatever it may be, into the ear of the god. He then stops his ears and leaves the marketplace, and when he is gone a little while outside, he takes his hands from his ears, and whatever words he hears, he takes as an oracle” (translation after Hallday (1913), 230f.).

⁸¹ See Bouché-Leclercq (1879-1882) vol. 1, 195: “Les rares oracles placés sous l’invocation d’Hermès fonctionnaient en appliquant le hasard à la parole humain”.

⁸² XXV 2, from Termessos (my no. 12). The text is metrically unusual, but possible. See also the much restored and difficult variation in Perge (my no. 9).

⁸³ The text is the one in Naour (1980), 24 no. 5 A 1-2, based on the readings by R.

This confirms the Apolline origin of the texts. If, then, the oracular voice is Apollo's, Hermes appears as the mediator of Apollo's words to the advisee, in a role that makes Hermes somewhat similar to the prophets of Delphi, Didyma and Klaros, and a role similar to that which the divine messenger plays regularly. This is also what the epigram next to the oracles on the city wall of Termessos implies, if the crucial supplements in the first line are correct:⁸⁴

Μουσο[πόλ' ὦ θ]εὸς Ἑρμῆς, Ἀπ[όλλωνος ὑποφήτ]ης
χαῖρε, Διὸς κὲ [Μαΐα]δ[ος εὖ]λαλος παῖ, Πονπ[αῖε.
αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ χρησμ[οῖσι]ν ἐτήτυμα θέσφα[τα φαίνο]ις.

God of the Muses, Hermes, prophet of Apollo, greetings, well-spoken son of Zeus and Maia, Helper in Travels; reveal to me in your oracles true divine words.

Somewhat more prosaically, the title on the side one of one of the Pergaeon oracles simply states Ἑρμοῦ ἀστραγαλομαντ[εῖον], "Dice Oracle of Hermes".⁸⁵ Hermes' presence, thus, might be justified in several ways that do not contradict each other: as the divine messenger of Apollo's words, as the god of chance and luck, and not the least as the divinity presiding over the space where most of the monuments were erected, the agora.

Thus, we are confronted with an almost homogeneous series of oracular texts from one given region and one given epoch, all with a similar function: whether inscribed on the pillars or, rarely, on walls, monuments, doorposts, they served as the reference *pinax* of an *astragalos* oracle, and their main clients were the traders and merchants who used the agora and travelled out through the city gate: during a lull in business or before going further with a deal or a journey abroad, you checked with Hermes and Apollo. In a way, the function of these *pinakes* is not so different from the screens that indicate stock prices or

Heberdey, *Wiener Studien* 52 (1932): 91 and differs considerably from the metrical, but highly restored version in Eugen Petersen and Felix von Luschan, *Reisen im südwestlichen Kleinasien*. Vol. 2: *Reisen in Lykien, Milyas und Kibyratis* (Wien 1889), no. 224a.

⁸⁴ TAM III 1 no. 35 (my no. 16); the supplements are Heberdey's. This dedicatory epigram is not in Reinhold Merkelbach and Josef Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten*, vols. 1-5 (Munich and Leipzig 1999ff.), in accord with their decision not to print the oracles but to leave them to Nollé's edition.

⁸⁵ Sencer Şahin, *Die Inschriften von Perge* 1. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 54 (Bonn 2000), no. 205; the supplement is mine. The alternative, an otherwise unattested epiclesis Ἀστραγαλομάντιος, is less likely.

exchange rates. And once the inventive *agoranomos* of one particular town—whichever it was—had set up such a gadget on its agora and the users liked it, all the major neighboring cities took up the idea, and it became something you just had to have. In this reading, the quasi-identity of the texts suggests one local inventor whom all the others, with two exceptions, just imitated.

There are, then, good reasons for the emphasis on commerce. In a fascinating paper on the Roman game of *alea*, Nicholas Purcell connected its deep embeddedness in Roman urban life with the fact that in Roman urban economy, too, chance was fundamental: “Accident remained central to economic experience in urban production, retailing and commerce.”⁸⁶ The dice oracles on the marketplace, thus, tap the same forces that drive mercantile life, but try to domesticate them by referring to the god who controls them: Hermes, the controller of the windfall, is consulted in order to make the windfall or the loss somewhat more foreseeable, even if Hermes then had to rely on his brother’s foreknowledge. After all, one of the gods invoked in our texts is Hermes Kerdemporos, “Hermes Who Brings Gains to the Merchants.”

It were not only merchants in the Roman empire who felt exposed to the forces of chance. In his ample description of the city of Kin-Sai (today the port city of Hang-chow), whose immense wealth was based, like Venice’s, on a huge network of international commerce and on the initiative of its merchants, Marco Polo also touched upon the divinatory habits of its inhabitants. Every new-born child, he says, has his horoscope taken, and “when he is grown up, and is about to engage in any mercantile adventure, voyage, or treaty of marriage,” the horoscope is consulted again.⁸⁷ The Venetian merchant-traveller must have deeply sympathized with the problems of those medieval Chinese merchants: he and they made their wealth more by hoping for than by relying upon the prosperous outcome of their commercial adventures.

⁸⁶ Nicholas Purcell, “Literate Games: Roman Urban Society and the Game of Alea,” *Past & Present* 147 (1995): 3-37, the citation on 21.

⁸⁷ My translation comes from *The Travels of Marco Polo [the Venetian]*, Manuel Komroff, ed. (New York 1926), 241, after Marsden’s translation, in 1841, of Ramusio’s Italian *editio princeps* of 1559; the highly acclaimed edition by Henry Yule and Henri Cordier (1902), that is based on the ‘nearly authentic’ Old French ms. does not contain this passage.

Given all this importance of the problems that become visible in the oracular answers on our stones, the modern reader is rather puzzled by the occurrence of what we only can understand as scribal errors. How did a writer or stone-cutter in Termessos (no. 12) get away with turning “the terrible night” (δ’ ὀλοή νύξ) into the Odyssean adjective “with crafty mind” (δολόμητις), changing the meaning of the answer and making its syntax uncomfortably awkward?⁸⁸ We can only guess. But we have to keep in mind that the ancient reader of all these oracles expected them to mean something, and that he must have found his meaning in these divine answers, however awkward they may seem to an epigrapher. Ancient readers might have been used to oracular language that could be esoteric and somewhat cryptic, and to the ensuing debate about its exact meaning. After all, the human capacity to find meaning in what seem to be or really are random phenomena is almost endless; that is the cutting edge with which evolution has provided our minds, and it is one of the most important cognitive reasons for divination. No oracle ever contained a nonsense word as the result of scribal error, however strange its syntax and however unmetrical some of its verses. This speaks loudly enough: ancient readers were expecting meaning, and they found it.⁸⁹

V. *Spreading Out in Time*

My account could end with this insight into oracles as fashion and trend, and with the nearly timeless plight of venture capitalism, were it not for the fact that these texts would surface again, in a different epoch, a different place and a different language, as the biblical scholar and polymath James Rendel Harris saw more than a century ago, although without the knowledge of the entire medieval tradition.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ See above, n. 28.

⁸⁹ See Grottanelli (2001) and Sarah Iles Johnston, “Lost in the Shuffle: Roman Sortition and its Discontents,” *ARG* 5 (2003): 146–56. For cognitive theory and religion, I am indebted to the works of Pascal Boyer, esp. to *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion* (Berkeley 1994) and *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York 2001).

⁹⁰ J. Rendel Harris, *The Annotators of the Codex Bezae (with Some Notes on Sortes Sanctorum)* (London 1901). Hansen (1998), 286, compares the Sanskrit poem *Paśāka-kevali*, ‘Dice Oracle’ (seventh cent. CE) that also uses a four-sided die, but only with three casts; it presents the casts and the oracles in a remarkably similar form. (I owe the reference to William Hansen, Indiana University.)

Numerous medieval manuscripts, starting as early as the early ninth century, contain a Latin oracular text that must have had, as William Klingshirn showed recently, the title *Sortes Sanctorum*, “Oracles of the Saints” rather than *Sortes Apostolorum*, a title that was attributed to them from time to time (see also Klingshirn’s contribution to this volume).⁹¹ Pierre Pithou (1539-1596) created the first printed edition from a manuscript from the Benedictine monastery of Marmoutier, now in Berlin,⁹² and a closely related Latin collection, the *Sortes Monacenses*, are attested in a tenth- or eleventh-century manuscript in Munich.⁹³ These texts were at home in Southern Gaul, from where, by the way, the *Sortes Sangallenses* also came, the late antique Latin equivalent of the Egyptian *Sortes Astrampsychi*—which is more than simple coincidence.⁹⁴ The *Sortes Sanctorum* use three six-sided dice, which also gives fifty-six possibilities, and the Latin Christian text is prefaced by ritual instructions in order to deal with possible religious objections to using such a private oracle at all:⁹⁵ the casting of the dice has to be preceded by three days of fasting, the singing of a mass, and then should be done *cum magna humilitate, orando et lachrymando*. Even more disturbing than Christians consulting an oracle (albeit of the saints) is the fact that the *Sortes Sanctorum* not only faithfully replicate the technique of the Greek inscriptions, down to their typical layout (at least in the Berlin manuscript used by Pithou):

CCI [two six,⁹⁶ one one]

Quod postulas nunc ita veniet cum magno gaudio, securus esto, Deum roga, et noli timere.

⁹¹ Klingshirn (2002), 77-130; this text contains a list of all manuscripts (seven Latin, one Provençal and one Old French). I thank him for discussing my paper in the light of his work and making his paper accessible to me.

⁹² Pithou’s text was printed posthumously in 1687 in *Codex Canonum Vetus Ecclesiae Romanae*, ed. Claude Le Peletier, and several times reprinted, see Klingshirn (2002), 129.

⁹³ Ed. princeps in Hermann Winnefeld, *Sortes Sangallenses. Adiecta sunt alearum oracula ex codice Monacensi nunc primum editae* (Bonn 1887), 53-60; Klingshirn (2002), 97.

⁹⁴ They are preserved in a palimpsest codex in the St. Gall library; ed. princ. by Winnefeld (previous note), critical edition with ample commentary A. Dold and R. Meister, *Die Orakelsprüche im St. Galler Palimpsestcodex 908 (Die sogenannten “Sortes Sangallenses”)*, Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 224:4-5 (Wien 1948).

⁹⁵ Klingshirn’s paper deals admirably with these objections that start as early as Augustine *Epist.* 55 (CSEL 34:2).

⁹⁶ C as the misreading of “a cursive ligature of V and I” Klingshirn (2002), 95, following Montero Cartelle, “Las ‘Sortes Sanctorum’: La adivinación del porvenir

What you are asking for will arrive with great joy; rest assured, ask God, and do not fear.

This, after all, is functional. More excitingly, in some cases, the Latin texts are closely connected with the Greek texts, as Gudmund Björck pointed out.⁹⁷ The Latin text just cited would read, if translated into the Greek of the inscriptions:

εὐρήσεις δ' ὅσα μαντεύῃ, χαίρων δ' ἐπιτεύξῃ,
θάρσει νῦν, αἰτεῖ τε Θεόν, μηθὲν δὲ φοβήθῃ.

Of course, this language is very general, and thus my “retranslation” might be deceptive.

A common proverb still might be coincidence, especially when already used in a similar context:

III III II

Quid calcas contra stimulum? iactare noli temetipsum, quia malum est de quo consulis. contra sortes noli ire. moneo te ne velis esse contrarius Deo.

Why do you kick against the goad? Do not inflate yourself, since what you have in mind is bad. Do not go against fate. I admonish you not to act against God.

compared to

αγγγδ ιδ
λάκτιζεις πρὸς κέντρα, πρὸς ἅντια κύματα μοχθεῖς...
οὐ σοι χρήσιμόν ἐστι θεοὺς βιάσασθαι ἀκαίρως

You kick against the goad, you struggle against the waves ... It is not helpful for you to force the gods at a bad time.

“To kick against the goad” is a proverb that is well attested in the Greek collections of proverbs (where it arrived from tragedy) and in a biblical context (Acts 9:5, Paul’s conversion scene). Both in the two attestations in tragedy and in the New Testament, it is used as a warning to fight against divine will, and the two oracles use it in exactly the same way.⁹⁸

en la Edad Media,” in Maurilio Pérez González, ed., *II Congreso Hispánico de Latin Medieval (León, 11-14 noviembre de 1997)* (León 1998), 111-32, at 119 n. 36.

⁹⁷ Björck (1939).

⁹⁸ Eur. *Bacch.* 795, see the closely related wording in Aesch. *Prom.* 323, of Pro-

Other wordings are just as close and more specific:

V IIII III

Canis festinando caecos catulos parit. sic et tuus animus. inproperare noli de quo postulas: si patiens fueris, veniet tibi ultro in potestate tua cum magno gaudio.

When making haste, a bitch gives birth to blind cubs; likewise your soul.
Do not make haste with the matter you are asking about; it will come to you by itself, with great joy.

This should be compared to XXI

ςγγα ις
οὐπω καιρὸν ὀρῶ, σπεύδεις δὲ σύ· μὴ κενὰ μόχθει·
μηδ' ὥς τις τε κύων τυφλὴν ἐκύησε λοχείαν·
ἥσυχα βουλεύου καὶ σοι θεὸς ἡγεμονεύει

and XXXII

ςγγ ιη
μὴ σπεύσης, δαίμων γὰρ ἀντίστανται, ἀλλ' ἀνάμεινον
μηδ' ὥς τις τε κύων τυφλὴν ἐκύησε λοχείαν⁹⁹

and—this one from Antiochia ad Cragum—

ααγγδ Υπερθέσεως
ἥρεμα βαῖν' ἐπὶ πράξιν, ἴν' ὥς ἐθέλεις κατατεύξῃ,
μηδ' ὥς τις τε κύων σπεύδων τυφλὴν θέτο γένναν.
ἥσυχα βουλεύου, καιρῷ γὰρ ἅπαντα τελεῖται.¹⁰⁰

The hasty bitch that gives birth to blind cubs is an old and traditional proverb, attested already in Archilochus and beyond him, a millennium earlier, in a letter from the king of Mari; but the contexts in all the oracles are surprisingly close.¹⁰¹ The last occurrence, in the one oracle with five *astragaloï* that deviated from the same family,

metheus' resistance to Zeus' power, and the parallels collected by Eric R. Dodds, ed., *Euripides: Bacchae*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1960), 173. The collections: *Corpus Pseudoepigraphorum Graecorum*, ed. F. Leutsch and F. G. Schneidewin, vol. 1 (Göttingen 1839), 148 (Zenobius V 70, with reference to Aesch. and Eur. ll.cc.), 301 (Diogenianus VII 84); vol. 2 (Göttingen 1851), 128 (Gregorius of Cyprus, cod. Mosqu. IV 100), 628 (Apostolius XIV 100, "said about those who damage themselves"). See already Björck (1939), 93, and Naour (1980), 35 n. 53.

⁹⁹ In both cases, Termessos (no. 12) has "lion", λέων, instead; given the background, this is a secondary development.

¹⁰⁰ Bean and Mitford (1965), 38 § 9.

¹⁰¹ Archilochus frg. 196a West; Mari: Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Archaic Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 122f.

alerts us to the fact that we certainly cannot posit a direct connection between the Anatolian inscriptions and the *Sortes Sanctorum*. But they belong to the same family, as more parallels would show, for which I refer to Björck's paper;¹⁰² and the members of this family are closely related among themselves, and very different from other families, such as the group constituted by the *Sortes Astrampsychi* and the *Sortes Sangallenses*. This, then, points to the common source of these oracles, in southeastern Anatolia no less than in southern Gaul; and as the late-antique Greco-Egyptian collection of the *Sortes Astrampsychi* arrived in southern Gaul and was Christianized there, similarly the Greek collection that has to be assumed to underlie the Anatolian texts travelled the same way and underwent the same transformation. At least it seems easier to assume that the (unknown) innovative *agoranomos* in southwestern Anatolia used an already written collection, when he for the first time in the region had a pillar cut and inscribed with the oracles for the use of anybody in the marketplace who felt he would need the commodity; the alternative—the oracles made it from the stones into a collection—cannot be fully excluded. But given the variations between the different texts that look in part like scribal errors, origin in a literary text is the more economical hypothesis.¹⁰³ At any rate, there is, thus, an entire lost continent of pagan oracular books, if not visible, at least discernible behind these intriguing epigraphical texts.

Appendix A: A Preliminary List of Texts

a. Main Group

1. Anabura in Pisidia: J.R.S. Sterrett, *Pap. Am. School Athens* 3 (1888), nos. 339-42 (G. Kaibel, *Hermes* 23, 1888, 339-42); *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiquae (MAMA)* 8, no. 391.
2. Attaleia/Adalia in Pamphylia: G. Hirschfeld, *Sitzungsberichte Berlin*

¹⁰² Björck (1939).

¹⁰³ Eugen Petersen and Felix von Luschan, *Reisen im südwestlichen Kleinasien*, vol. 2: *Reisen in Lykien, Milyas und Kibyratis* (Wien 1889), 175, followed by Heinevetter (1912), 28, assumed a local inscription as the common source for all texts then known. But that was when only a few rather uniform texts were known, and before the connections with the *Sortes Sanctorum* were explored.

- 1875, 716 (G. Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca* no. 1038); J. Woodward, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 30 (1910): 260.
3. Hamaxia in Cilicia Tracheia: G. E. Bean and T. B. Mitford, *Journeys in Rough Cilicia 1964-1968*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Denkschriften, 102. Ergänzungsbände zu den Tituli Asiae Minoris 2 (Wien 1970) no. 53; Nollé, *Zeitschr. f. Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 48 (1982): 276f.
4. Kremna in Pisidia: G. H. R. Horsley and S. Mitchell, *The Inscriptions of Central Pisidia*. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 57 (Bonn 2000), 22 no. 5.
5. Laodikeia ad Lycum in Phrygia: Th. Corsten, *Die Inschriften von Laodikeia am Lykos, Teil 1*. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 49 (Bonn 1997), 136 no. 69.
6. Marmareis/Saracik in Lycia: *Tituli Asiae Minoris (TAM)* II 3 no. 1222.
7. Ormeleis in Pisidia: G. Cousin, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 8 (1884): 496-508; J.R.S. Sterrett, *Pap. Am. School Athens* 2 (1887), nos. 56-58; new side E. N. Lane, *Corpus Monumentorum Religionis Dei Menis (CMRDM)* 4, p. 53 (*SEG* 31, 1981, 1285)
8. Perge in Pamphylia, Agora: Sencer Şahin, *Die Inschriften von Perge I*. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 54 (Bonn 1999), no. 205.
9. Perge in Pamphylia: H. A. Ormerod, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 32 (1912): 270-76; Sencer Şahin, *Die Inschriften von Perge I*. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 54 (Bonn 1999), no. 207 (after the manuscript of Nollé).
10. Sagalassos in Pisidia: K. Graf Lanckoronński, *Die Städte Pamphyliens und Pisidiens* 2: *Pisidien* (Wien 1892), 139.
11. Takina/Yarasli in Phrygia: *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum (CIG)* 3956c (G. Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca*, no. 1041); W. M. Ramsay and A. H. Smith, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 8 (1887), 260 no. 50.
12. Termessos in Lycia, block from the interior of the city: *TAM* III 1,34.
13. Tyriaion in Lycia (Cabalis): Eugen Petersen and Felix von Luschan, *Reisen im südwestlichen Kleinasien*. Vol. 2: *Reisen in Lykien, Milyas und Kibyratis* (Wien 1889), 174 no. 224a-c; Chr. Naour, *Tyriaion en Cabalide: Épigraphie et géographie historique* (Zutphen 1980), 23-36 (incorporating revisions by E. Kalinka and R. Heberdey).

b. *Five astragaloi, but personifications only, and a somewhat different text*

14. Antiochia ad Cragum in Rough Cilicia: Bean and Mitford (1965), no. 42.

c. *Seven instead of five astragaloi*

15. Selge in Pisidia: Johannes Nollé and Friedel Schindler, *Die Inschriften von Selge*. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 37 (Bonn 1991), no. 4.

16. Termessos in Lycia, city wall: *TAM III* 1 no. 35.

d. *Unclear*

17. Perge in Pamphylia, Theatre, a few fragments only: Sencer Şahin, *Die Inschriften von Perge I*. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 54 (Bonn 1999), no. 206.

*Appendix B: A Tentative Translation of the Main Oracle Texts*¹⁰⁴

- | | | |
|-----|------------|---|
| I | 11111 5 | Zeus Olympios |
| | | If you see only Chians: Zeus will give good thinking to your mind, stranger: he will grant happiness to your work, for which you will give thanks. But appease Aphrodite and the son of Maia. |
| II | 11113 7 | Athena Areia |
| | | If four Chians and one three are cast, the god signals: By avoiding enmity and animosity, you will reach your prize; you will arrive and the blue-eyed goddess Athena will save you. The activity that you have in mind will turn out as you wish it. |
| III | 41111 8 | Moirai |
| | | If one four and four Chians in a row are cast: Don't do |

¹⁰⁴ The translation follows mainly the more or less identical long texts from Kremna (no. 4) and Perge (no. 8), while the Termessos version (no. 12) contains the most variations. I refrain from even a rudimentary critical apparatus; this will be the task of the editor of the entire corpus. I am indebted to Horsley and Mitchell (2000) for some particularly felicitous turns of language.

the business that you are engaged in; it will not turn out well. It will be difficult and impossible around someone who tires himself out. But if you go abroad for some time, no harm will come from it.

IV 33111 9 Zeus' eagle¹⁰⁵

If two threes and three Chians are cast: A high flying eagle on the right-hand side of the traveller will be a good omen; with the help of Greatest Zeus (Zeus Megistos), you will achieve your goal; do not fear.

V 61111 10 Daimôn Megistos

If one six and four Chians in a row: It will be better to fulfill whatever vow you made to the *daimôn*, if you intend to perform what you ponder in your mind. Demeter and Zeus will save you.

VI 11143 10 Caring Fortune¹⁰⁶

If three are Chians, one a four and the fifth a three: Do not do the business you are about to do; as for the very intention you have, the gods are restraining it,¹⁰⁷ but they will free you from your toil and no harm will meet you.

VII 33311 11 Victory

If three threes are cast, and further two Chians: You will win;¹⁰⁸ you will take what you wish, and you will achieve everything; the *daimôn* will make you honored, and you will overcome your enemies; the plan that you are about to realize will be according to your desire.

VIII 44111 11 Joyful Victory

If two fours and three Chians in a row are cast: Do all your business, because it will turn out well. The gods will save him who is ill from his bed; also the god announces that he who is in another country will return home.

IX 41133 12 Asklepios

If one four, two Chians and two threes are cast: A storm

¹⁰⁵ Var. "Eagle", presumably by simple oversight.

¹⁰⁶ Var. "Fortune, Bringer of Happiness", or "Happy Fortune", Τυχὴ Εὐδαιμονίζουσα or Εὐδαιμών.

¹⁰⁷ Variation τὸν τε ἐν νοῦσφι ἔόντα θεοὶ κατέχουσι σεαυτὸν in Termessos (no. 12), in somewhat awkward Greek which must mean "the gods restrain/hold back yourself being in illness." For a similar variation between "illness", νοῦσος, and "intention", νοῦς, see below oracle XII n. 115.

¹⁰⁸ Var. "You will make gains."

will come about your business, but it will turn out well;¹⁰⁹ also the god announces that he will free the one who is ill from his suffering;¹¹⁰ and the gods will bring safely home the one who is abroad.

- X 11163 12 Steering Tyche
 Three Chians, a six, and the fifth throw a three: Do not yet make haste to go; it is impossible to go, rather wait;¹¹¹ if you set out to rush mindlessly, you will do great damage to yourself, but if you wait, blameless¹¹² time will accomplish everything.
- XI 11164 13 Aphrodite
 Three Chians and a six and the fifth a four: Sail wherever you wish; you will return full of joy, for you have found and accomplished everything that you ponder in your mind; but pray to Aphrodite and the son of Maia (Hermes).¹¹³
- XII 13333 13 Zeus and Athena¹¹⁴
 If one Chian and four threes are cast: You are fit for every business and ready for any undertaking. The gods will easily save him who is ill,¹¹⁵ and all will be well as to the other oracles.
- XIII 33331 13 The Seasons¹¹⁶
] and impossible [—]; the god does not allow the plan that you follow, thus wait: it is terrible to walk into enmity, competition and a trial.

¹⁰⁹ Termessos (no. 12) has “A storm will come about your business, a wintery one,” without any information about its outcome.

¹¹⁰ This same meaning is expressed in different, somewhat varying Greek in different inscriptions.

¹¹¹ The variation “it is better not to go” (μόλοντι [ἄμεινον]) in Termessos (no. 12) might simply result from a wrong reading of a damaged passage on the stone.

¹¹² “Blameless” is the metrically necessary reading, preserved in Termessos (no. 12) but absent from most other copies that transmit different variations of this final verse.

¹¹³ Var. “Kypris likes you, the smiling daughter of Zeus.”

¹¹⁴ Var. “Zeus Who Comes Down (Kataibates).”

¹¹⁵ I translate the reading of Termessos (no. 12), τὸν τ’ ἐν νούσῳ ἐόντα θεοὶ σώξουσιν ἐτοίμως, variations of which appear elsewhere; Kremna has τὸν γε νοῦν σὸν ἐόντα θεοὶ σώσουσιν ἐτοίμως, rather awkward Greek (“Gods will readily make safe your actual intention”, in the translation of Horsley and Mitchell); for the variation of “illness” and “intention,” see also n. 107 on oracle VI, and my remarks above, at n. 57.

¹¹⁶ The first two lines are lost.

- XIV 13334 14 Poseidon
One Chian, three threes, and one four: The god announces: You kick against the goad, you struggle against the waves, you search for a fish in the sea: do not hasten to do business. It does not help you to force the gods at the wrong time.
- XV 61133 14 Daimôn
One six, two Chians, and a pair of threes. Do not project terrible things, and do not pray for what is against the gods, thinking terrible thoughts.¹¹⁷ There will accrue no gain from it, and no reward will come from this path you are walking.
- XVI 44411 14 Agathos Daimôn
If three fours and two ones are cast: The *daimôn* will lead you on the way that you undertake, and the lover of smiling, Aphrodite, will lead you toward good things. You will return with rich fruit and an untroubled Fate.
- XVII 13344 15 Zeus Savior
One Chian, two threes, two fours being cast: Approach with courage the business that you set out to do; do it! You will win, since the gods have given you these favorable signs, and do not avoid them in your intention: nothing bad will come from it.
- XVIII 11166 15 Zeus Ammon
If three ones and two sixes are cast: The god announces to you: Undertake with courage the way you set out in your mind, god will give you everything: you will accomplish whatever your mind tells you, and Zeus, thundering high, will be with you as your savior.
- XIX 33333 15 Tyche the Savior¹¹⁸
If all the threes are cast together: The woman who has given birth to a child, had both breasts dry, but she again flourished and has milk in abundance. Then you too will reap the fruits about which you ask me.
- XX 43611 15 Zeus of Hosts and Guests (Xenios)
A four, a three, a six and two Chians: Do not make haste

¹¹⁷ Var. "... against the gods. You are thinking terrible thoughts: there ...".

¹¹⁸ Variation: "Good Luck," Τυχὴ Ἀγαθή.

with the business for which you set out, it is not yet time. The gods will easily save him who is ill, and the god announces that he will make an end to the travel of him who is in foreign land.

- XXI 63331 16 Herakles
 One six, three threes and the fifth a Chian: The moment has not yet arrived, you make too much haste. Do not act in vain, nor like the bitch¹¹⁹ that has borne a blind puppy. Deliberate calmly, and the god will lead you.
- XXII 64411 16 Ares
 One six, two fours, and a two Chians: Why do you hurry? Wait calmly, the moment has not yet come; if you hurry without sense and in vain, you pursue something that is not yet ready. I do not yet see the right moment, but you will have success when you wait a little while.
- XXIII 43333 16 Kronos
 One four is cast, the other four are threes: Scorpions stand in your way, do not hurry towards the business that you intend; wait, and what you wish will arrive later; neither to buy this nor to sell is better.
- XXIV 44413 16 Delphic¹²⁰ Apollo
 Three fours, one Chian, and the fifth a three: Do not make haste; it will not be better to go; when you wish to rush mindlessly, you will damage yourself very much; but when you stay put, blameless time will perform everything.¹²¹
- XXV 66113 17 Isis the Savior
 A double six, two Chians and the fifth a three: Enter and receive the voice from the tripod! The time is also ripe for marriage; you will marry and return home. You will achieve whatever you want in your business, having found the thing about which you are anxious.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Variation "lion," λέων instead of κύων; see also oracle XXXII.

¹²⁰ The epithet is left out in some oracles; it would be desirable to ascribe the following oracle to Delphic Apollo, since it mentions his tripod, but we have no evidence for such a change.

¹²¹ Kremna has a different text: "Do not rush, I do not yet see the right moment; later, you will accomplish everything according to your wish, and the god will lead you. You will not be in a hurry to buy this nor to sell it."

¹²² Thus Kremna; Perge (no. 6) has minor variations, some due to long and not always easy restorations, the most important being "the time is ripe and flourishing,"

- XXVI 16334 17 Hermes the Savior¹²³
 A Chian, a six, two threes and the fifth a four: I do not see anything painful among the things about which you ask me; do not think small, go forward with courage; you will find everything you wish: your vow will be fulfilled, and there is a perfect occasion for you.
- XXVII 44333 17 Sarapis
 If two fours are cast and three threes: Take courage and fight, Zeus the Owner (Ktesios) is your helper. You will punish your opponent and have him under your fist, and he will give happiness to the works for which you will thank him.
- XXVIII 14444 17 Revenge
 When a single Chian is cast, and the others are fours: Now the *daimôn* will fulfill everything for you and lead you the right way. You will perform everything according to your mind, do not wear yourself out anymore. You will achieve beautifully whatever you desire.
- XXIX 66114 18 Adrasteia ["She Whom You Cannot Escape"]
 If two sixes, two Chians, and the fifth a four: Do your business and undertake it; the time will be favorable. In the middle,¹²⁴ difficulties and danger are waiting. As to the other oracles, things will turn out well for you.
- XXX 16443 18 Zeus of the Lightning
 A Chian and a six, two fours and the fifth a three: What you plan will not turn out according to your liking, when you do it; it is not useful to travel to foreign lands. You will show no insight if you sell now, nor will it be useful.
- XXXI 44433 18 The Greatest Daimôn¹²⁵
 If there are three fours and two threes, he signifies this: I do not see this plan as safe for you; thus wait. You will do well, after this there will be luck; as for now remain calm, trust the gods and stay hopeful.

θάλλον instead of θαλαμῶν; Termessos (no. 12) reads instead: "With much you will arrive at home, with a good *daimôn* you will perform what you wish, having found the thing about which you are anxious."

¹²³ Variation: "God the Savior."

¹²⁴ Variation: "at the beginning."

¹²⁵ Variation "of the Suppliant."

- XXXII 63333 18 Good Time
A six and four threes together; the oracle announces thus: Do not make haste, the *daimôn* is opposed to you, rather wait and do not act like a dog¹²⁶ that gave birth to a blind litter. Take counsel calmly, and things will turn out happily for you.
- XXXIII 66133 19 Good Hope
Two sixes, a Chian and two threes; he signifies this: Everything about which you ask me is smooth riding for you and safe; do not be afraid, a *daimôn* will lead you towards everything; he will end the painful difficulties and you will disprove the suspicions.
- XXXIV 44461 19 Zeus of Possessions
Three fours, one six, and the fifth a Chian: Proceed with courage, the oracle is about hope, stranger; it announces also that the sick person will be saved. If you need to consult an oracle, you will receive what you desire.
- XXXV 34444 19 Hermes Who Brings Gain in Trade
If one three and four fours are cast: Zeus will give a good plan to your mind, stranger; thus, all will be well, undertake what you desire; you will find whatever you ask the oracle for, and nothing will be bad for you.
- XXXVI 33364 19 Victory
Three threes, one six and the fifth a four: You pronounce a good oracle, stranger; once you have thought it through, you will do whatever you desire, and the god will be your helper; you will win, you will reap the fruits, and you will achieve everything.
- XXXVII 44444 20 The Inexorable Moirai
If all four are cast together in the same way: The sun has gone down, and terrible night has come,¹²⁷ everything has become dark. Interrupt the matter about which you ask me; it is neither better to buy nor to sell.
- XXXVIII 43661 20 The Moon¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Variation: "lion," λέων instead of κύων, see also oracle XXI.

¹²⁷ Variation δολόμητις, attested only as an (already Homeric) adjective: "he/she of the tricky mind;" see above n. 28 and 88.

¹²⁸ Variations: Nemesis ("Revenge") or Helena.

A four and a three, two sixes, and the fifth a Chian: Do not undertake this business, stranger; it will not turn out well for you. The god announces that he will help the one who is ill; and if there is any fear, nothing bad will happen to you.¹²⁹

- XXXIX 63344 20 The Protecting Dioskouroi
 Alone the six, two threes, the others fours: A man who makes haste does not achieve what opportunity offers. You have a profit, and there is fear¹³⁰ everywhere because of evil; your business is ill-fated, and everything is painful; watch out!
- XL 66611 20 Hephaistos
 Three sixes and two Chians; he will tell the following: It is impossible to do business; do not toil in vain! And do not turn every stone, lest you chance upon a scorpion. Fussiness will not bring you luck, be on your guard for all sorts of misfortune!
- XLI 66441 21 Demeter
 A pair of sixes, two fours, the fifth a Chian: Everything about which you ask me is on a smooth way for you and safe; do not be afraid, a *daimôn* will lead you towards everything; I see nothing that will bring you harm; take heart and go forward.¹³¹
- XLII 44463 21 Helios, Bringer of Light
 Three fours, one single six, and the fifth a three: You will achieve whatever you desire, and you will find whatever you worry about. Make an attempt, stranger, having taken heart; everything is ready; you will find what is invisible, you will come to the day of salvation.
- XLIII 33366 21 Tyche who Leads to Good Things
 When three threes are cast and two sixes, he announces this: Your matters are doing well; this oracle tells you to press forward; you will get away from difficult illness and

¹²⁹ This oracle varies somewhat in different places, never yielding very good metre, but without changing its basic meaning.

¹³⁰ "Fear," φόβος, is the reading in Perge (no.9) and Termessos (no. 12), while Kremna (no. 4) has, implausibly but picturesquely, νέφος, "cloud."

¹³¹ The last verse reads also "He will free you from difficult grief, he will free you from suspicion" (Termessos, no. 12).

master everything, and the god announces that he who is erring in a foreign land will return.

- XLIV 16663 22 The Manifest Fates
One Chian, three sixes, the fifth being cast is a three: Do not put your hand into a wolf's mouth, lest some harm happens to you; the matter about which you ask is difficult and delicate; but you stay quiet, avoiding travel and business transactions.
- XLV 44446 22 Poseidon
If all that are cast are fours, but the fifth is a six, he announces this: Throwing seeds and writing letters on the sea are both pointless toil and fruitless doing; since you are mortal, do not force a god who might harm you.
- XLVI 43366 22 Terrible Ares
Four and two threes, two sixes, and he announces this: Do not undertake the travel that you intend, stranger! Nobody will do it. A large fiery lion is about, against whom you have to be on your guard, a terrible one. The oracle is untractable, wait quietly.
- XLVII 16664 23 Athena
One Chian, three sixes, and the fifth a four: Honor Pallas Athena, and you will get everything, whatever you wish, and everything which you are planning will turn out well; she will free from bonds and will save the sick person.
- XLVIII 66443 23 Happiness
If two sixes are cast and two fours, and the fifth is a three: Sail, wherever you want, you will return home again, having found and done everything according to your wish; you will achieve everything, and thus to buy and to trade is happiness.
- XLIX 66633 24 Apollo Pythios
If three sixes and two threes are being cast, he signifies this: Stay put, do not act, obey Phoibos' oracles. With time, you will find an occasion, but for now stay quiet. If you wait a short while you will achieve everything, whatever you desire.
- L 44466 24 Kronos the Child Eater
Three fours, two sixes; the god announces this to you: Stay at home with your possessions and do not go somewhere else, lest a terrible monster and a revengeful demon

approach you. I do not see this business as reliable and safe.

- LI 46663 25 Mên Who Brings Light¹³²
 One four being cast, three sixes and the fifth a three: Take courage; you have an opportunity; you will achieve what you desire, and you will come upon the right time to begin your travel; your toil will have its chance;¹³³ it is good to engage in work, competition and litigation.
- LII 66661 25 Mother Of the Gods
 Four sixes, the fifth a Chian: he signifies this: As wolves overpower sheep and powerful lions overpower broad-hoofed oxen, so you too will master all this,¹³⁴ and everything about which you ask will be yours, with the help of Zeus' son Hermes.
- LIII 66644 26 Subterranean Zeus
 When three sixes and two fours, the oracle announces: The business has its obstacles, do not make haste, but wait; there is a road, painful, impossible and not to be approached; to buy is difficult and to sell brings loss.
- LIV 66663 27 Heavenly Aphrodite
 Four sixes, the three alone: he signifies this to you: The daughter of Uranus, Aphrodite, the mighty mistress of the Erotes, sends a good oracle, she will grant travel to you; you will escape from sickness and vainglorious thoughts.
- LV 66664 28 Damage
 Four sixes, a four: he signifies this: It is impossible to undertake something in vain; do not in vain toil uselessly, lest you incur damage by pressing on. It is not good to begin travelling nor doing business.
- LVI 66666 30 Square Hermes
 If all that are cast together are sixes: Do not go, wherever you intend to; it will be better for you to stay; I see

¹³² Termessos (no. 12) reverses the divinities of LI and LII, giving LI to the Mother of the Gods, LII to Mên; the oracles in themselves, however, do not change.

¹³³ Or, according to a (wrong, in my eyes) correction in Perge (no. 8), "fruit," καρ(π)όν instead of the widespread καιρόν.

¹³⁴ The first two lines vary somewhat, sometimes yielding difficult Greek, without however changing their overall meaning.

something hostile to you,¹³⁵ thus wait; afterwards, it will be possible, and (the god) will free you from fear and save you from toil.¹³⁶

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¹³⁵ Rather than "I see your enemy," as Horsley and Mitchell (2000) translate; the Greek (ἐχθρὸν γάρ σοι ὄρω) is somewhat ambiguous.

¹³⁶ Variation: "As to the things you are asking me, I foresee disgraceful fame for you; stay quiet, interrupt travel and business transactions."

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CHRISTIAN DIVINATION IN LATE ROMAN GAUL: THE *SORTES SANGALLENSES*¹

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The ways in which divinatory consultations were conducted in antiquity, the specific actions taken by diviners and clients, and particularly how diviners and clients interacted in the search for hidden knowledge are problems that have not been extensively studied. Recent research in central and west African divination has focused on the performative and aesthetic aspects of divinatory rituals (LaGamma 2000; Pemberton 2000), on the dialogue between diviners and clients (Zeitlyn 1995), and on their collaboration in making decisions and formulating “plans of action” (Peek 1991). Although the ethnographic evidence on which this research is based is unavailable to ancient historians, work on African divination does suggest how we might exploit the evidence we do have. Of particular relevance is Philip Peek’s suggestion that divination research shift its focus from “product analysis,” that is, the way “oracular information [is] used,” and toward “process analysis,” the way it is “derived, represented, and negotiated” (Peek 2000, 26).

Late antiquity would seem to offer a suitable time frame for this endeavor. Not only do a number of divinatory texts survive from the third through seventh centuries in Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Syriac, but because divination itself was actively contested, so do laws, sermons,

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Abbreviations for primary sources are taken from OCD³, with the following additions: Caesarius, *Serm.* = Caesarius of Arles, *Sermones*

MGH, *SRM* = *MGH*, *Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*

church councils, saints' lives, and ecclesiastical histories that mention, describe, and attack its practitioners and clients. An abundance of such evidence makes Gaul a fruitful region for investigation, especially between 450 and 600, when receding imperial control, expansion by local warlords, aristocratic maintenance of cultural continuity, and the emergence of a strong episcopacy bring to light aspects of a divinatory culture that was probably in place elsewhere, but is often difficult to see.

A key text is provided by canon 16 of the council of Vannes, convened between 462 and 468 by Perpetuus, bishop of Tours.

Some clergy are devoted to the interpretation of signs (*auguria*), and under the label of what pretends to be religion—what they call Saints' Lots (*sanctorum sortes*)—they profess a knowledge of divination, or by looking into any kind of writings whatever (*quaecumque scripturae*) they predict future events. Any cleric found either to have consulted (*consulere*) or expounded (*docere*) this should be considered estranged from the church.²

As I have argued elsewhere, the term 'Saints' Lots' refers to a specific text for lot divination variously entitled *Sortes Sanctorum* or *Sortes Apostolorum* (Klingshirn 2002). Consisting of 56 responses and accessed by a triple dice throw, it belongs to the same family as the Greek lots from Asia Minor studied by Professor Graf in "Rolling the Dice for an Answer." In its Latin, Christian form, it survives in numerous manuscripts of the ninth to sixteenth century. This was clearly the main text the bishops at Vannes were worried about, principally, it appears, because its title linked it (erroneously in their opinion) with the saints. The same view prompted the councils of Agde (506), Orléans (511) and Auxerre (561/605) to condemn it as well. But the bishops at Vannes and Agde also noted the clergy's use of other divinatory *scripturae*, which they did not or could not name. A number of possibilities are attested in late antique Gaul. Gregory, bishop of Tours from 573 to 594, describes how biblical books such as the Psalms and Gospels were used by clerics and others for the so-called *sortes biblicae*.³ Caesarius, bishop of Arles from 502 to 542, alludes to the clerical use of *lunaria*, lists of prognostications based on the days of the month,

² *Concilia Galliae, A. 314–A. 506* (CCSL 148:156): *aliquanti clerici student auguriis et sub nomine confictae religionis quas sanctorum sortes uocant, diuinationis scientiam profitentur aut quaruncumque scripturarum inspectione futura promittunt, hoc quicumque clericus detectus fuerit uel consulere uel docere ab ecclesia habeatur extraneus.*

³ *Hist.* 4.16; 5.14, 49; 8.4.

several of which survive in later manuscripts (Svenberg 1936; Svenberg 1963).⁴ Also extant are manuscript copies of lot collections similar to the *Sortes Sanctorum*. These include the *Sortes Monacenses* (Munich, Clm 14846, fols. 106v–121r), *Sortes Sangermanenses* (Paris, B.N., lat. 11553, fols. 125r–134v), and *Sortes Sangallenses* (Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 908, pp. 187–218, 275–76, 293–94).⁵

All these texts share certain similarities: they belong to a type of lot divination in which questions are answered by consulting a fixed array of responses; they were written in Latin but translated or adapted from Greek models; they can be organized into definite families based on those models; they borrow freely from one another; and they can be labeled, to a greater or lesser degree, “Christian.” They are also in many respects very difficult to place in their proper context. There are good reasons to believe that they were used in Gaul during the fifth and sixth centuries by diviners known as *sortilegi*⁶ and *sorticularii*,⁷ at least some of whom may have been clergy, but exactly who these diviners were, how they operated, how clients interacted with them, and how, in Peek’s words, the divinatory knowledge they dispensed was *represented*, *derived*, and *negotiated*, are still open questions.

In a provisional attempt to answer these questions, and as part of a larger project on diviners in late antiquity, this article focuses on the *Sortes Sangallenses*. It is the longest of the Latin lot collections, the richest in content, and closely enough related to its better-known Greek cousin, the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, to provide useful comparisons.⁸ Although it has been thoroughly combed for valuable information about late

⁴ Caesarius, *Serm.* 1.12 (CCSL 103: 9): *nullus paganorum sacrilego more consideret qua die in itinere egrediatur, vel qua die ad domum propriam revertatur, quomodo non solum laicos, sed etiam, quod peius est, nonnullos religiosos timeo more sacrilego praeveniri*. See also *Serm.* 54.1 (CCSL 103: 236): *nullus ex vobis observet, qua die de domo exeat, qua die iterum revertatur*. Cf. Svenberg 1963, 26: *non exeas in via*.

⁵ Texts of all these *Sortes* can be found in Harris 1901, an immensely useful work.

⁶ Caesarius, *Serm.* 12.4 (CCSL 103:61); 13.3 (CCSL 103:67); 50.1 (CCSL 103:225); 52.5 (CCSL 103:232); 54.1 (CCSL 103:235); Gregory of Tours, *In gloria martyrum* 40 (MGH, SRM 1.2: 514), *De virtutibus sancti Martini* 1.26 (MGH, SRM 1.2: 601); *Vita Caesarii* 1.55 (MGH, SRM 3: 479); Auxerre (561/605), can. 4 (CCSL 148A: 265).

⁷ Narbonne (589), can. 14 (CCSL 148A:256). Interestingly, this canon envisions the possibility that women could practice as lot diviners: *si qui viri ac mulieres divinatores, quos dicunt esse caragios atque sorticularios*. . . .

⁸ The *Sortes Astrampsychi* has now been definitively edited by Randall Stewart (Stewart 2001b), with important additional material in Stewart 2001a. An English translation can be found in Hansen 1998.

Latin syntax, orthography, and diction (Meister 1951; Kurfess 1953), west Roman administration and law (Schönbauer 1953), late antique social history (Demandt 1990), and the mentalities of slaves (Kudlien 1991) and the general population (Strobel 1992), the *Sortes Sangallenses* has not been examined as an example of a divinatory text operated by a practicing diviner. This is because the prevailing assumption is that, like the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, it hardly required a diviner to operate it. As David Potter writes of the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, “The actual oracle-monger had only a very small role: he acted as the god’s agent interpreting the wisdom of the sage Astrampsychus” (Potter 1994, 25). This view, along with the strong implication in the term ‘monger’ that the diviner practiced a disreputable trade, goes back to Gudmund Björck, who argued in 1939 that the *Sortes Astrampsychi* and *Sortes Sangallenses* belonged to a type of private divinatory handbook that already stood on the verge of “pure charlatanry, or rather a game of occultist entertainment” (Björck 1939, 94: “Die Erscheinung steht schon zur Hälfte auf dem Boden der reinen Charlatanerie, bzw. des okkultistischen Unterhaltungsspiels.”) But if we step back from the view that independent diviners were by definition charlatans, and furthermore from the view that divination by lot was inferior to other, inspired kinds—both views strongly represented in the classical literature of divination—we can see in the *Sortes Sangallenses* and similarly configured texts a flexible and powerful instrument for divinatory work. It is this view that I would like to take in search of the living world in which the *Sortes Sangallenses* was produced and used.

II

In the fragmentary form in which we presently have it, the *Sortes Sangallenses* consists of 525 divinatory responses found on 18 (paginated) folia of a composite palimpsest manuscript, of which it forms the primary text.⁹ Written in an uncial script datable to ca. 600, the responses are

⁹ For a full description of the manuscript and its primary and secondary texts, see Lowe 1956, nos. 953–965 and 1018, and Scherrer 1875, 324–28.

¹⁰ Hermann Winnefeld numbered only 52 dodecads in his edition (Winnefeld 1887b), but two more were discovered by Alban Dold (Dold 1948). For their original organization, see Meister 1951, 168. Because they fall between Winnefeld’s dodecads 24 and 25, I have numbered them 24a and 24b. See the Appendix for further discussion.

labeled from I to XII and grouped into 54 dodecads.¹⁰ Responses to the same question are not grouped into the same dodecad but rather spread over 12 contiguous dodecads, so that the first response to a question is in one dodecad, the second is in the next, and so on. As we shall see, a simple formula would have allowed the diviner to make use of this arrangement, while leaving it opaque to the client. The pattern is similar to that used in the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, but simpler, since it does not show evidence of the shuffling of groups of responses that we see in the *Sortes Astrampsychi*. Unlike the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, the surviving text of the *Sortes Sangallenses* does not number the dodecads¹¹ or contain a list of questions,¹² both of which would have been necessary to operate the oracle. These elements may have been lost when the leaves of the original manuscript were taken apart, cut down, and re-used. This may also have been the time at which over two thirds of the original responses were lost. The original book would thus have consisted of at least 60 folia of responses, with additional folia required for the questions and perhaps for other elements (a dedicatory letter, instructions for use, prayers).¹³

The manuscript in which the *Sortes Sangallenses* is now located consists of 206 (paginated) folia in Sankt Gallen (Stiftsbibliothek, 908, pp. 187–218, 275–76, 293–94), and 4 folia in Zürich (Zentralbibliothek, C 79b, fols. 16–19) that were removed from the rest of the manuscript in the early 18th century.¹⁴ The bulk of the manuscript's upper text (Sankt Gallen, pp. 75–412; Zürich, fols. 16–19) consists of Latin glosses in an early ninth-century hand;¹⁵ the remainder contains a variety of patristic writings in the same hand (Sankt Gallen, pp. 1–74).¹⁶ The lower text consists of seven simple and four double palimpsests, for a total of 13 earlier texts, which date from the fifth to the eighth centuries.¹⁷

A simple palimpsest, the *Sortes Sangallenses* falls into the part of the manuscript that is covered with glosses. Written on parchment that

¹¹ The absence of such numbers was noted by Winnefeld 1887b, 3, and Meister 1951, 169.

¹² Winnefeld 1887b, 11.

¹³ Ibid., 9, 12.

¹⁴ Lowe 1956, 33.

¹⁵ The glosses are identified in Goetz 1889, xxvi and Goetz 1923, 306–308.

¹⁶ These include excerpts from Augustine, Isidore, and Gregory; a *Syllabus peccatorum*; and *Loca monachorum* (Dold 1948, 7).

¹⁷ A complete list can be found in Lowe 1956, no. 953.

now measures ca. 205 mm. x ca. 135 mm. (Lowe 1956, 35), these glosses are arranged in double columns that leave space between and generally do not extend to the bottom of the page, an arrangement that allowed some of the original text to remain uncovered. Some care was also taken in re-sizing the original parchment so as not to cut off the original writing, with the happy result that little writing has been lost at the top, bottom, or external margins. As shown in the Appendix, the original pages were somewhat larger than they are now, perhaps 230 mm. x 165 mm., with wide margins and a writing frame of ca. 180 mm. x ca. 105 mm.

Several of the palimpsested texts of MS 908 were identified by Barthold Georg Niebuhr on a visit to the monastery library in 1823. Among these were fragments of the poetry and prose of Flavius Merobaudes, which Niebuhr first published at St. Gall,¹⁸ and then corrected and republished the following year in Bonn.¹⁹ At the end of his introduction to the edition, he gave a reasonably complete description of the manuscript. But he pointedly refused to give any details about writings as lowly as the *sortes*: “No one, I believe, will blame me for ignoring the trifles (*nugae*) that fill several pages of this codex, on divination from dreams, as it seems” (*Nemo autem, credo, reprehendet quod nugas spreverim quae non paucas eiusdem codicis paginas implent, de divinatione ex somniis, ut videtur*, Niebuhr 1823, xi). In 1875 Gustav Scherrer followed this identification in his manuscript catalogue for Sankt Gallen (“Traumdeutungen in vielfach wiederholter römischer Nummernzahl von I–XII,” Scherrer 1875, 327–28). It was Franz Buecheler who recognized in 1877 that Niebuhr’s *nugae* were not dream interpretations, but belonged to a lot oracle (Buecheler 1877, 15). As comparanda he cited two recently published texts: an inscription from Asia Minor (Kaibel 1876) and the *Sortes Astrampsychi* (Hercher 1863). Buecheler published a few preliminary readings in his note, but left the task of editing the text to Hermann Winnefeld, a student of his at Bonn. Winnefeld spent the summer of 1885 examining the manuscript and in 1887 published it as his dissertation (Winnefeld 1887b). The same year he republished it with an appendix containing his edition—the first—of the *Sortes Monacenses* (Winnefeld 1887a).

¹⁸ *Fl. Merobaudis carminum orationisque reliquiae* (St. Gall 1823).

¹⁹ *Fl. Merobaudis Carminum panegyricique reliquiae ex membranis Sangallensibus*. Editio altera emendatio (Bonn 1824).

In 1948, taking advantage of photographic techniques he had already used in editing other texts from MS Sangallensis 908, Alban Dold published an improved edition that serves as the basis for the present study. He presented the text in two formats: the original one in which the responses to each question are separated (Dold 1948, 73–115), and a rearranged format in which responses to the same question are grouped together (Dold 1948, 20–72). While the latter makes the text easier for scholars to understand, as Dold intended, it also misleadingly portrays the work as it never existed for either diviner or client. I shall therefore cite responses in their original format by dodecad and response number (e.g., 47.10 for dodecad 47, response 10). Because the text's questions are missing, however, I shall use in their place the numbered topics supplied by Dold in his rearranged version (e.g., topic 53).

The contents of the *Sortes Sangallenses* certainly predate our only surviving copy of it. In an unpublished letter to G. M. Browne summarized by Randall Stewart, T. C. Skeat argued that the *Sortes Sangallenses* was derived from a lost earlier version of the *Sortes Astrampsychi* that was both more extensive and more simply organized than the surviving version (Stewart 1995, 136–37). Since the earliest surviving witness to the *Sortes Astrampsychi* is dated about AD 236 (Stewart 1995, 138), the version postulated by Skeat must be earlier, perhaps as early as the first century AD. New fragments of the *Sortes Astrampsychi* from a papyrus codex of the 5th/6th century, which include passages related to the *Sortes Sangallenses* that are not found in any other copy of the *Sortes Astrampsychi* (Stewart 2001a), could be a witness to this early version. For present purposes, however, it is more important to date the version we have than an archetype. Recurrent Christian elements in our version indicate that it cannot be dated before the fourth century. Dold (1948) and Meister (1951) plausibly date it to the late fourth century, but Schönbauer (1953) has showed that this is not a *terminus ante quem*, since a number of the text's legal and administrative details can be paralleled in epigraphic and legal texts from fifth- and sixth-century Gaul. While this observation frustrates efforts to establish a precise date, it also suggests that the *Sortes Sangallenses* could have served as a practical handbook for divination at any time from the late fourth to late sixth centuries. With a text that could easily be altered (within limits, as we shall see), the *Sortes Sangallenses* did not have to fall out of date, and we must assume, was not considered out of date when it was copied for the last time, apparently around 600.

A document like the *Sortes Sangallenses* moves not only through time but also space. The script of our surviving copy has been described by E. A. Lowe as Italian (Lowe 1956, 33), but its contents place it into a broader cultural zone that stretched from northern Italy through southern Gaul and northern Spain. These were regions that throughout the fifth and sixth centuries, despite being incorporated into Visigothic, Ostrogothic, Frankish, Burgundian, and Lombard kingdoms, remained highly Roman in law, civic administration, education, and literary and technical culture. Commentators have assigned the *Sortes Sangallenses* to southern Gaul, more or less broadly defined (Dold 1948, 16; Schönbauer 1953, 34; Demandt 1990, 636), but the Gallic identification is not secure (Niedermann 1954, 233), and northern Italy and Spain offer equally plausible locations. Perhaps it would be safest to locate the *Sortes Sangallenses* in a region centered on southern Gaul that also included large territories to the east and west.

III

It will be convenient to begin with the way in which divinatory knowledge was represented in the *Sortes Sangallenses*. Most obviously, it was knowledge that was written down, a representation of what seems to be everyday Latin speech, but which turns out on closer inspection to be extremely compressed and cryptic, as befits divinatory language (Werbner 1989). Many responses are simply vague general statements, for example response 6 to the question of whether one should have an associate: "It is necessary for you to have an associate" (30.6). But other responses defy straightforward translation, for instance response 2 to the same question. Does *Inmittis odium bono tuo* (28.2) actually mean, as Meister conjectures, "Du wirst dir einen Feind in dein gutes Geschäft setzen" (Meister 1951, 118), or is this simply one possible interpretation of many the diviner might propose?

Narratologically, it is important to note that the text of the *Sortes Sangallenses* speaks in the first person to a client in the second person, at a narrative instant in the present. Although it sometimes speaks grammatically in the first person: "I warn you not to harm your enemy, for he is nothing" (*Moneo ne malefacias inimico tuo, quia nihil est*, 13.3), it more often speaks in a present or future imperative: "Do not fear sadness" (*Noli timere tristitiam*, 16.3); "Be secure" (*securus esto*, 22.3). Most often it simply narrates what is the case: "Your house has good protection" (*bonam tutelam habet domus*, 46.12) or what will, should, or

might happen: “You will not have your mother’s inheritance” (*non habebis hereditatem matris tuae*, 21.1). As in earlier systems of Latin lot divination, it is the *sors* itself and not the diviner that speaks (*ILLRP*, no. 1083). The diviner’s job is to provide inquirers with access to the knowledge encoded in the *sors* along with an interpretation of it.

Although this knowledge is ultimately divine, the *sors* does not itself speak in a divine voice. Rather, it defers to the divine, directing the inquirer to pray to God or the Lord (*Ora deum*, 19.5, 40.7; *Roga dominum*, 9.11; *Ora dominum*, 11.8) and to rely on divine assistance (*domino iuvante*, 2.4; *deo iuvante*, 8.12; *deo adiuvante*, 52.9). If, as is likely, the *Sortes Sangallenses* configured itself theologically in the same terms as the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, then it would have validated the divine knowledge contained in its *sortes* by reference to revered ancient sages and figures of power. The preface to the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, which takes the form of a letter written by the Persian (or Egyptian) sage Astrampsychus to king Ptolemy, claims that the book (ἡ βίβλος) was the invention or discovery (εὕρημα) of the philosopher Pythagoras, and that Alexander the Great relied on it for his success (Stewart 2001b, 1–2, 4, 87–88). Since this letter appears in manuscripts of the *Sortes Astrampsychi* that contain Christian interpolations, we can assume that, like their redactors, the Christian editor(s) of the *Sortes Sangallenses* would have had no problem relying on the prestige of such philosophical or royal authorization, though we cannot of course know for certain, since no prefatory material survives for the *Sortes Sangallenses*.

How was the divine knowledge in the *Sortes Sangallenses* derived? We can see two stages, first in the original creation of the *sortes* and second in the use of dice or other selection devices to choose the correct *sors*. The first stage is obscure. The user of the codex that contained our 18 surviving folia may have conveyed the impression to clients that the book with wide margins and fine writing had been composed under divine inspiration, perhaps by Pythagoras or another revered figure. This would have been a reasonable claim, since much of the *Sortes Sangallenses* had in fact been taken from the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, partly by translation, partly by adaptation, and partly by free imitation (Harris 1901, 161–62). Other parts may have been taken from equally respectable divinatory texts, for instance the *lunaria* mentioned above, a number of whose prognostications show close affinities with those of the *Sortes Sangallenses* (Svenberg 1940). That the responses of the *Sortes Sangallenses* and its sources are in prose rather than verse suggests that, unlike other collections of oracles, they were not represented as

deriving directly from Greek shrines, where hexameters would have been the norm. As the preface to the *Sortes Astrampsychi* suggests, the origins of these kinds of *sortes* were more personal than institutional. This was especially apt for texts that could be as easily changed as the *Sortes Sangallenses* and *Sortes Astrampsychi*. Ifa divination among the Yoruba of Nigeria offers a parallel. Although most of the verses that constitute its revelation derive “from the corpus of African folklore,” it is also possible for diviners to come up with new verses, either “from dreams or individual creativity.” Some diviners, for instance, “are born with Ifa verses ‘inside them’” (Bascom 1969, 137).

However it had acquired its rich fund of knowledge in the distant past, the *Sortes Sangallenses* offered another avenue for divine intervention in the immediate present: the dice or other selection devices by which correct responses were chosen. In the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, divided into decades, the client was asked to choose a number between 1 and 10, which God would give him as he opened his mouth (καὶ ὁ θεὸς δῶη αὐτῷ ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματος, Stewart 2001b, 1). This option was available for the 12 possible responses of the *Sortes Sangallenses*. The client could also have used a dodecahedral die, an urn containing counters numbered I–XII, or some other device. What was most important was not the type of device, but that the client himself or herself was given the number under direct divine guidance, probably after a certain amount of ritual preparation. In manuscripts of the *Sortes Astrampsychi* with Christian interpolations, diviners were given a prayer for themselves and their clients to recite, “so that the divine would be kindly to them and would reveal the future in accord with their inquiry” (ὕπὲρ τοῦ εὐμενὲς αὐτοῖς ἔσεσθαι τὸ θεῖον καὶ τὸ ἐξόμενον ἀποκαλύψαι κατὰ τὴν ζήτησιν, Stewart 2001b, 2).

The process of negotiating the divine knowledge that was thus derived and represented takes us to the center of the diviner’s involvement with his client. The diviner’s actions can be seen at every stage, beginning with the client’s initial approach. Let us suppose that a client arrived with concerns about a rival or enemy. The diviner’s first obligation would have been to conduct an interview that would determine the exact nature of the client’s problem and the exact question that should be put to the text. For instance, it was important to distinguish legal opponents (*adversarii*) from personal enemies (*inimici*), since different questions dealt with each type (Demandt 1990, 641). It was also important to separate manifest hostility from hidden dangers such as the fear of a friend’s betrayal (4.9, 15.6), poisoning by one’s

wife (48.10), or unknown domestic intrigues (46.9). If the interview revealed that the client feared, let us say, active hostility from a personal enemy, the diviner could narrow the range of possible questions to two: “Should I harm my enemy?” (topic 31) or “Will my enemy die?” (topic 27).

Once it was determined which question was most appropriate, again by careful discussion with the client, the diviner would then help the client procure a number from God. Combining this number with the number of the question would direct the diviner to the correct response by a simple formula. (The Appendix suggests how this might have worked in the original configuration of the text.) For instance, if the client wanted to know whether he should harm his enemy (topic 31) and was divinely furnished with the number 2, the formula would take the diviner to response 2 in dodecad 12: *Habebis occasionem ut interimas inimicum tuum* (“You will have the opportunity to destroy your enemy.”)

But what did this response mean? To find out, the diviner had to continue his dialogue with the client, combining his knowledge of the divinatory text with details of the client’s circumstances in a delicate negotiation of meaning. Did the response mean that the client would have an opportunity to literally “kill” his enemy? Or did it refer to some other kind of destruction? Here, the other three other surviving answers to the question (known only to the diviner) would have been relevant (Zeitlyn 2001, 234). Response 3, already quoted above, warned the client not to harm his enemy (*ne malefacias inimico tuo*), since he was “nothing” (13.3). Response 8 (14.8) asks the client why he threatens his enemy (*minaris inimico*), since “he has died [or is dead] among the dead” (*inter mortuos mortuus est*). And response 9 (15.9) advises the client that if he seeks a legal judgment against his enemy, he will “ruin” him (*interficiet inimicum*). The language is violent; whether the action should be was (and is) open to interpretation (Meister 1951, 109–110).

After diviner and client had discussed the meaning of the response, they then needed to formulate a concrete decision or plan of action. “Send to that diviner,” says a character in one of Caesarius’s sermons, “and he will tell you what you will do or whether you can escape” (*Mitte ad illum divinum . . . et ipse tibi dicet quid facies, aut utrum evadere possis*, *Serm.* 184.4 [CCSL 104:750]). Some decisions or plans could be formed and put into effect by the client on his or her own. For instance, the client who was told that “Your friend esteems you greatly, but you are neglecting him” (*amicus te in multum diligit, sed tu circa eum neglegens*

es, 29.10), could probably take action himself to pay more attention to the neglected friend.

In other cases clients may have needed further divinatory help that the lot diviner could not in good conscience provide. A client who was told “Your dreams are true and you will profit” (*Visa vera sunt et lucrabis*, 6.9) might need to be referred to a dream diviner, just as a client who was told “You do not have the horoscope of a magistrate” (*magistrati genesem non habes*, 28.7) might need to be referred to an astrologer. In addition, lot diviners may often have referred clients to practitioners of other sciences and rituals, such as healing, protecting, litigating, blessing, cursing, or binding. A client who was told to “summon a physician and pray to God” (*medicum adhibe et ora deum*, 40.7) might need a referral to that physician, as might a client who was told “Help yourself, because you have been poisoned” (*succurre tibi, quia medicamentatus [es]*, 47.9). A client who was told to initiate a lawsuit (topics 94, 97) or that someone else had initiated one might need to find a patron or legal advocate. Well aware of the fabric of their community’s ambitions, suspicions, and fears, as well as, by the nature of their work, closely familiar with the network of practitioners available to ameliorate (and profit from) these, diviners may well have been the best source of objective and confidential referrals.

In still other cases diviners themselves may have been able to assist. A client who has found out that “You must be protected by remedies if you do not wish to be driven from your house” (*Remediis tibi tuendum est, si vis non fugari de domo*, 47.10) might have been told that a *sortilegus* was just the kind of specialist he needed. Among the Greek canons translated by Martin of Braga and approved by the second council of Braga (572) was a ruling that prohibits anyone from bringing *divini*, and specifically *sortilegi*, into his house, in order to drive out evil, uncover evil deeds (*maleficia*), or perform pagan purifications.²⁰ Especially when the problem was one of diagnosing the prospects for long-term survival in the face of an acute illness, a diviner might have been more help than a physician, who might make things worse by surgery (topics 115–117).

²⁰ “Si quis paganorum consuetudinem sequens divinos et sortilegos in domo sua introduxerit, quasi ut malum foras mittant aut maleficia inveniant vel lustrationes paganorum faciant, quinque annis poenitentiam agant,” *Canones ex orientalium patrum synodis* 71, ed. Claude W. Barlow, *Martini Episcopi Bracaraensis Opera Omnia* (New Haven 1950), 140.

A good example is the *hariolus* called in to cure a slave belonging to Gregory of Tours. He “came to the sick boy and tried to practice his art: he murmured incantations, cast lots, hung amulets around his neck, and promised that he would live. . . .”²¹

Whatever followed from divinatory consultations, the most respected diviners would have been those who, in the end, offered not only the most objective and helpful advice, but also those who helped their clients enact that advice. Although the most basic details of their words and actions still elude us, it is clear that the clients and diviners who used the *Sortes Sangallenses* can be represented as engaging in a serious and important business. As David Zeitlyn reminds us, “It is possible to do divination as a game, as a procedure without any cognitive or emotional load being carried. However, such cases (which occur both in Europe and elsewhere) are aberrant” (Zeitlyn 1995, 189). In order to work as divination, the *Sortes Sangallenses* cannot have been simply a machine for dispensing Yes and No answers. It must have depended, crucially, on the personal context in which these answers were sought and had meaning. It is to a better understanding of this context that we now turn.

IV

Even if there is much we cannot know about the clients and diviners who used the *Sortes Sangallenses*, the text’s moral horizons can at least suggest what kind of world they lived in. The advice to summon a physician and pray to God in the case of illness provides an appropriate starting point. For it seems to fit perfectly with the message the Christians of late antique Gaul were hearing from their bishops. According to Caesarius, mothers with sick children “should anoint them with oil blessed by a priest and put all their hope in God. . . . Would that they would even look for healing from the simple art of physicians” (*oleo benedicto a presbyteris deberent perungere, et omnem spem suam in Deo ponere. . . . Et atque utinam ipsam sanitatem vel de simplici medicorum arte conquirent*, *Serm.* 52.5 [CCSL 103:232]). Also congruous with church teaching is the text’s recommendation about drawing up a testament: “Make your will in such a way that you give to the poor and com-

²¹ Gregory of Tours, *De virtutibus sancti Iuliani* 46a (MGH, SRM 1.2:132).

mend your soul to God” (*Fac testamentum ita ut pauperibus dimittas et anima tua deo commendes*, 7.9), and about releasing someone in custody: “Release the person and you have gained a soul for God” (*[dimi]tte persona et lucrasti animam Deo*, 11.10). Fittingly from a Christian point of view, the text also assures the client of God’s omnipotence and help in time of need: “God turns away your sufferings” (*Deus avertit mala tua*, 23.10) and “The Lord is already destroying him” (*Dominus per[d]it illum*, 16.4).

But alongside these and other recurrent Christian themes, one also sees in the *Sortes Sangallenses* a parallel world seemingly unaffected by church teaching. Clients are never told to attend Mass, donate to a church, visit a saint’s tomb, or (apart from personal prayer) perform any overtly Christian act. Although the text mentions judges (*iudices*, topic 130), a banker (*argentarius*, 44.3), and a physician (*medicus*, 40.7), as well as various types of government officials, it never mentions a bishop or any other church figure. By contrast, Christian versions of the *Sortes Astrampsychi* mention monks, priests, bishops, and withdrawal to the holy places (Stewart 2001b, xiv–xv). Nor do Christian ideas about forgiveness, bodily pleasures, or material prosperity receive much prominence in the *Sortes Sangallenses*. Not that the text fails to promote a basic decency toward others. For instance, it reassuringly observes that “You will be a praetor and act humanely toward all” (*Eris praetor et circa omnes humanus*, 28.5). Likewise, it asks “Why do you lightly charge an innocent man, since he is not guilty?” (*Quare facile innocentem incriminas, cum non sit conscius*, 14.11). But for the most part, it warns clients to look out for their own good fortune, to make decisions on the basis of aggressive self-interest, and to protect themselves by recourse to every available friend, patron, and legal remedy. In other words, just as we see in other sources from late antique Gaul, it is expected that clients will demonstrate a sturdy Mediterranean self-reliance, a general mistrust of authority, a wary suspicion toward neighbors, and a firm resolve to match favor for favor, insult for insult, and injury for injury (Klingshirn 1994, 181–226).

If we seek a textual world in which *these* particular values were paramount, we can find it in the corpus of west Roman “vulgar” law, adapted from Roman imperial law and represented in the legal texts of the fifth- and sixth-century western kingdoms (Schönbauer 1953; Levy 1951). The moral world of these texts matches that of the *Sortes Sangallenses* at many points, especially in advice about inheritance (top-

ics 59–64), fugitives (topics 77–83), and lawsuits (topics 53, 54, 93–96, 98). One can, for example, compare *Sortes Sangallenses* 8.6 on profits from a military campaign—“Go with good luck on the expedition and you will return victorious with your profits” (*Vade feliciter in expeditionem et victor venis cum lucris tuis*)—with *Codex Euricianus* 323 on the same subject—“If a husband acquires any profit on an expedition with his wife’s slaves or his own, his wife should not presume thereafter to seek any share from her husband” (*Maritus si cum servis uxoris vel suis in expeditione aliquid lucri fuerit consecutus, nihil exinde uxor a viro suo praesumat repetere*, D’Ors 1960, 39).

The coincidence in a single document of distinctively different moral worlds—one shaped by Christian scriptures and values, and the other by Roman laws and practices—is not as puzzling as it might seem. For these two worlds constantly intersected during the fifth and sixth centuries, as increasingly assertive church leaders in Italy, Gaul, and Spain attempted to construct new frameworks of public order and moral practice, regulated not by a civic hierarchy of local aristocrats but by the bishop and his clergy. Their attempts at political realignment can best be seen in another body of moral and legal writings: the collections of canons enacted at diocesan, provincial, and national church councils. Numbering in the hundreds, these canons provide us with a reverse image of the moral world of the *Sortes Sangallenses*. It was a world anchored not in individual self-interest, but in the self-interest of the church. It was a world mediated not by an unregulated mass of diviners, healers, lawyers, and other practitioners, but by a carefully ranked cadre of clerics (bishops, priests, deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, lectors, doorkeepers). And it was a world increasingly differentiated by religious affiliation (Christians, pagans, heretics, schismatics, Jews), spiritual status (catechumens, neophytes, penitents, religious, laity, clergy), and fine grades of gender-based sexual purity (virgins, widows, adulterers, married women, twice-married women, men never married, men married once, men married twice, divorced men).²²

By looking at the growing body of church law in which, among other restrictions, clergy were prohibited from practicing divination, as at

²² A survey of these rules as they pertained to priests is now available in Godding 2001.

Vannes in the 460s, Agde in 506, and Orléans in 511, we can see, first of all, how Christian leaders rejected the opportunity to consolidate divination in church hands by allowing local clerics under their control to practice as diviners. Clearly this was a role that some clergy were already playing, especially with explicitly Christian texts like the Bible and the *Sortes Sanctorum*. One can imagine how, with their training in Christian ethics, fund of local knowledge, and access to powerful modes of protection and healing (amulets, blessed oil, relics, the eucharist), clerics might have made very successful diviners, able to counsel their clients about a full range of problems and to offer specific remedies and practical strategies. It would have been possible, moreover, for the church to control the texts these clerical diviners used if it mandated the kinds of lots we are considering here, since fixed answers could be arranged to permit only “orthodox” results (Werbner 1973). But officially at least and (over the long run) in practice, the church did not take this path. There are numerous factors to explain this, but for our purposes one factor can be singled out for what it says about divination in late antique Gaul. This was the overwhelming emphasis in church law on the separation of clerics from lay persons, and especially from their “worldly” lives and concerns—the very stuff of divination. A brief survey of the fifth-century Gallic councils, beginning with the council of Vannes, will suffice for a demonstration of this point and of its effects on the practice of divination.

Of the sixteen canons passed at the council of Vannes, half concerned clerics. The main thrust of these was to tighten up episcopal control over clergy (canons 5, 9, 10) and to regulate clerical behavior. A particular effort was made to keep clergy from engaging in activities that were permissible for other Christians, for instance having access to secular courts and patrons (can. 9), eating with Jews (can. 12), or, if they were priests, deacons, or subdeacons (and thus prohibited from marrying after ordination), attending wedding parties where their senses might be contaminated by music, singing, and dancing (*ne auditus et obtutus sacris mysteriis deputatus turpium spectaculorum atque verborum contagio polluat*, can. 11). Clerics were also warned against getting drunk (can. 13) and missing morning hymns (can. 14). Finally, of course, they were ordered to stop practicing divination (can. 16).

The regulations of other fifth-century councils attempted to separate clerics from lay Christians in similar ways. A large number specified the exact degree of sexual purity required for each clerical rank: for

instance, although married men could be ordained, men married twice (*bigami*) or men who had married previously married women (*intenuptiarum mariti*) were prohibited from rising above the rank of subdeacon.²³ Several canons attempted to regulate the professions in which clergy could engage. At the second council of Arles, datable to the late fifth century (Mathisen 1997), clerics were prohibited from lending money at interest, serving as bailiffs on someone else's property, or engaging in any activity "for the sake of shameful profit."²⁴ Two councils excommunicated clergy who entered the army and thus abandoned one set of ranks for another.²⁵ Specific vices were also restrained. The *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua*, a list of canons that was never enacted but represents a program of reform ideas (CCSL 148:164–185), penalizes clerics who speak abusively (can. 44), engage in flattery or treachery (can. 43), or display envy at the progress of their brothers (can. 42). It also advises bishops not to ordain clergy who stir up discontent, practice usury, or seek vengeance for their injuries (can. 55).

Of course, all the activities denied to clergy by the fifth-century church councils—from going to court to seeking vengeance to practicing divination—are precisely the ones we see in the *Sortes Sangallenses*. The attempt to keep clergy from engaging in such activities represents an attempt to prevent them from participating in life as it was lived in fifth-century Gaul. Two conclusions follow. First, the moral framework of the *Sortes Sangallenses* was well suited to the moral environment in which it operated, especially for the benefit of urban property holders at or just below the curial level. Second, the exclusion of the clergy from that moral environment also meant their exclusion from the economy of divination. Although the church's efforts to separate clergy and laity can hardly be judged to have been generally successful, it does appear that by the end of the sixth century clergy were not as involved in the active management of divination as they had been in the mid-fifth century. Divination itself continued to be condemned by later sixth-

²³ Orange (441), can. 24 (CCSL 148:84); Arles II, can. 45 (CCSL 148:123); cf. Arles (506), can. 1 (CCSL 148:193).

²⁴ II Arles, can. 14 (CCSL 148:117): *Si quis clericus pecuniam dederit ad usuram aut conductor alienae rei voluerit esse, aut turpis lucri gratia genus aliquod negotiationis exercuerit, depositus a clero a communione alienus fiat.*

²⁵ Angers (453), can. 7 (CCSL 148:138); Tours (461), can. 5 (CCSL 148:145).

²⁶ Narbonne (589), can. 14 (CCSL 148A:256–57) and Auxerre (561/605), can. 4 (CCSL 148A:265).

century councils,²⁶ but their canons no longer suggest that clerics practiced it. At the same time we also begin to see the emergence of other kinds of lot divination that were not based on texts. One example is divination based on “wood or bread” condemned between 561 and 605 by canon 4 of the council of Auxerre (*CCSL* 148A:265). Writing at the end of the sixth century, Gregory of Tours portrays clergy as practicing only biblical and dream divination (note 3 above; *Hist.* 5.14); other kinds of divination he attributes to laymen like Guntram Boso (*Hist.* 5.14; 9.10) or to shadowy *harioti*²⁷ and *sortilegi*.²⁸

The Christianized but essentially secular contents of the *Sortes Sangallenses* certainly fit this picture. The document reveals no obvious signs of clerical involvement, as it might have if clergy were still in the business of divination. It is rather to be likened to other Roman technical writings that were being copied in the sixth and seventh centuries—grammatical treatises, surveyors’ manuals, and the like—writings that were essential for professional work in these fields and had nothing to do with the clergy or church.²⁹ It may not advance our knowledge very far to maintain that users of the *Sortes Sangallenses* were like the professionals who compiled these texts, since they too are unknowable to us. Still, it is significant that *their* texts were re-copied after 600, whereas the *Sortes Sangallenses* was not. And not only was it not re-copied, but it was, in effect, destroyed before its time, when a copyist of patristic texts and glossaries decided to re-use it as a palimpsest.

Its ignominious fate suggests that the cultural space in which the *Sortes Sangallenses* could still be seen as useful in ca. 600 was no longer available to it 200 years later. Various explanations can be imagined, but the most likely might be that its level of highly specific legal, administrative, and cultural detail was found to be unsuited to the post-Roman world of late Merovingian and early Carolingian Gaul. Although individual responses could easily be altered, the work’s overall level of detail could not be. It thus ran head-on against the limits of its

²⁷ Gregory of Tours, *De virtutibus sancti Martini* 1.27 (*MGH, SRM* 1.2:601); 4.36 (*MGH, SRM* 1.2:658).

²⁸ See note 6 above.

²⁹ Examples include the writings of the *agrimensores* in an Italian manuscript in Wolfenbüttel (Herzog August-Bibliothek, MS Aug. 2°. 36. 23, fols. 2–83), which Lowe dated to the sixth century (Lowe 1959, 39), and the *Ars Grammatica* of Cledonius in a manuscript in Bern (Burgerbibliothek 380), which Lowe dated to ca. 600 (Lowe 1956, 8).

adaptability. Unlike the *Sortes Sanctorum*, whose far more general and morally bland responses made it (moderately) popular in succeeding centuries, the *Sortes Sangallenses* was structurally too peculiar and sharply Roman to survive the transition from late antiquity to the early middle ages. But the features that prevented it from passing out of its cultural world were also the same features that gave it a central place within it. Despite all the difficulties of interpretation and context it poses, it remains one of our most useful sources for the problems of everyday life in the fifth and sixth centuries. More than that, it offers us a view of the diviner's world from the inside that, with a bit of imagination, can be connected to the world outside, and thus reveal the circulation of words and actions that it set in motion wherever and whenever its diviner and client met to solve those problems.

Appendix: The Original Codex of the Sortes Sangallenses

Dimensions

Hermann Winnefeld demonstrated that the pages of the original codex of the *Sortes Sangallenses* were taller and much wider than those of Sankt Gallen MS 908 (1887b, 1–2). The height and width of the original manuscript can be seen on a bifolium consisting of pp. 275/276 and 293/294. When it is compared with the other bifolia re-used for the new codex there are two differences to be noted.

First, unlike the other bifolia, which were folded along the same vertical line as in the original and then cut down about equally on both outer margins (in such a way as to preserve the original writing), this bifolium was shifted several centimeters to one side, folded along a different vertical line, and cut down far more on one margin than the other (Winnefeld 1887b, 2). This folding error caused portions of two blocks of text to be lost from the outer margin of pp. 293/294 (24a.9–24b.12 and 25.5–26.5), but also preserved an outer margin for pp. 275/76 of ca. 30 mm.³⁰

Second, the bifolium in question was trimmed not at the bottom,

³⁰ Winnefeld reported that no writing at all was visible on p. 293 (Winnefeld 1887b, 2), but Dold recovered some on its right side that belongs to portions of two new dodecads. These follow Winnefeld's dodecad 24 (Meister 1951, 168), but unfortunately they were not given numbers by Dold or Meister. To preserve Winnefeld's system, they should be numbered 24a and 24b.

like the other bifolia, but at the top. This left the original bottom margin visible, and demonstrates that it measured ca. 25 mm., about the same as the (surviving) top margin of the other bifolia. As a result, we can say that the pages of the original manuscript measured about 230 mm. (205 mm.+25 mm.) in height and 165 mm. (135 mm.+30 mm.) in width.

Organization

Although Winnefeld demonstrated that the original codex of the *Sortes Sangallenses* must have been at least three times as long as the 18 folia (36 pages) that survive (1887b, 3–9), he did not attempt to reconstruct the numbering of the original system. He did, however, pave the way for Dold to reconstruct the topics that the original system must have contained, and from these we can determine the questions that were probably posed. The work of both scholars can be used, with some improvements, to reconstruct the organization of the whole book, and especially the mechanism by which the correct response was chosen. To do this, we must assume that the present list of responses contains at least some fakes. Fake responses were required in this oracle, as in the oracle of Astrampsychus (Browne 1970), because the distribution of answers to the same question over 12 different dodecads required at least the first 11 (Table 1) and last 11 dodecads (Table 3) to be filled out with between 1 and 11 responses that could never be reached. The main sign of a fake response is that it does not cohere with the other responses in its set. Dold's organization of the text by topic reveals at least three such responses. Although he did not identify them as fakes, it seems clear that they are. The first two occur at the end of Winnefeld's Dodecad 1:

- XI quid prom[ittis . . .] religiosus
et aliut in [. . .] quid cogitas?
- 11 What are you, as a religious man, promising
and what else are you thinking in [. . .]?
- XII qua re h[omines f]alles? sed deum
non potes [fallere per in]postura.
- 12 Why do you deceive people? But you cannot
deceive God through trickery.

The third occurs at the end of Winnefeld's Dodecad 2.

XII cum gaudio optinebis quod desideras.

12 You will joyfully obtain what you desire.

Dold's list of topics shows the first and the third of these as answers to question 2, and the second of these as the sole surviving answer to question 1. But it is difficult to see any connection between the first and third responses. One response asks how the religious man could have one thing in his heart and promise another, and the other reassures the inquirer that he will receive what he desires. The connection between responses in the *Sortes Sangallenses* is usually obvious, and since this connection is not, and furthermore, since it occurs near the beginning of the oracle, where one would expect fake answers, I would suggest that both 1.11 and 2.12 may be fakes. This means that 1.12 would also be a fake, since the number of fake answers in the oracle must decline from 11 in the first dodecad to none in the twelfth. We can therefore surmise that the present Dodecad 1 was originally Dodecad 10 and the present Dodecad 2 was originally Dodecad 11. The first dodecad without any fake answers, the original Dodecad 12, would be the present Dodecad 3.

If this is correct, we must reduce the number of (extant) authentic questions to 135, since Dold's topics 1 and 2 would then not correspond to real questions. This allows us to calculate the total number of correct responses in the original oracle as at least 1620 (135×12). In addition to these, there would have to have been at least 66 fake responses at the beginning and 66 fake responses at the end of the text to fill out the grid ($11+10+9+8+7+6+5+4+3+2+1 = 66$). This makes a minimum original total of 1752 responses, of which 525 are extant, and 146 dodecads, of which 54 are extant. Of course, there could have been even more responses in the original codex, both in the form of fake answers at the beginning and end, and in the form of authentic answers to topics we no longer have. If this were the case, we could not reconstruct the original organization satisfactorily. On the basis of what we have, however, we can reconstruct the original format according to Tables 1–3. Table 1 shows Dodecads 1–12, of which the first eleven included both fake and authentic answers. Table 3 shows Dodecads 135 to 146, of which the last eleven would have contained both fake and authentic answers. Table 2 shows how much of the text is now missing, and how the extant dodecads correspond to the hypothetical original ones. To avoid confusion, the Tables use Roman numerals for Winnefeld's dodecad numbers, and Arabic numerals for dodecads in the (hypothetical) original codex.

Divinatory Procedure

To derive the correct response to a question, the diviner needed both the number of the question (q) and the number of the response (R). Adding these two numbers and subtracting one (1) from the sum would have produced the correct dodecad number (D), according to the formula $q+R-1=D$. The response number (R) remained the same. Thus, to find the correct answer to question 3, where the response numbered 5, the diviner performed the operation $3+5-1$. This led the diviner to dodecad 7, where response 5 constituted the correct answer. To find the correct answer to question 135, where the response numbered 10, the diviner performed the operation $135+10-1$. The correct answer was therefore response 10 in dodecad 144. The same procedure would have applied to any intervening dodecad. Although the original questions do not survive, a rough sense of these can be gathered from Dold's topic headings. We should note however, that with the elimination of the fake questions that make up Dold's first two topics, his topic 3 would correspond to question 1, topic 4 to question 2, and so on all the way to topic 137, which would correspond to question 135.

Table 1. Original Dodecads 1-12

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10=I	11=II	12=III
R I	q1.1	q2.1	q3.1	q4.1	q5.1	q6.1	q7.1	q8.1	q9.1	q10.1	q11.1	q12.1
R II	Fake	q1.2	q2.2	q3.2	q4.2	q5.2	q6.2	q7.2	q8.2	q9.2	q10.2	q11.2
R III	Fake	Fake	q1.3	q2.3	q3.3	q4.3	q5.3	q6.3	q7.3	q8.3	q9.3	q10.3
R IV	Fake	Fake	Fake	q1.4	q2.4	q3.4	q4.4	q5.4	q6.4	q7.4	q8.4	q9.4
R V	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	q1.5	q2.5	q3.5	q4.5	q5.5	q6.5	q7.5	q8.5
R VI	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	q1.6	q2.6	q3.6	q4.6	q5.6	q6.6	q7.6
R VII	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	q1.7	q2.7	q3.7	q4.7	q5.7	q6.7
R VIII	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	q1.8	q2.8	q3.8	q4.8	q5.8
R IX	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	q1.9	q2.9	q3.9	q4.9
R X	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	q1.10	q2.10	q3.10
R XI	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	q1.11	q2.11
R XII	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	q1.12

=I, II, III, etc.
q Winnefeld, Dodecad I, II, III, etc.
R question
Response

Table 2. Correspondence between Original Dodecads and Extant Dodecads

Original Dodecad	Extant Dodecad (Winnefeld)
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	I
11	II
12	III
13	IV
14	V
15	VI
16	VII
17	VIII
18	IX
19	X
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	
26	
27	
28	
29	XI
30	XII
31	XIII
32	
33	
34	
35	
36	XIV
37	XV
38	XVI
39	
40	
41	
42	
43	

Table 2. Cont.

Original Dodecad	Extant Dodecad (Winnefeld)
44	
45	
46	
47	
48	
49	
50	XVII
51	XVIII
52	XIX
53	
54	
55	
56	XX
57	XXI
58	XXII
59	XXIII
60	XXIV
61	
62	
63	XXIV _a
64	XXIV _b
65	XXV
66	XXVI
67	
68	
69	
70	
71	XXVII
72	XXVIII
73	XXIX
74	
75	
76	XXX
77	XXXI
78	XXXII
79	XXXIII
80	XXXIV
81	XXXV
82	
83	
84	XXXVI
85	XXXVII
86	XXXVIII

Table 2. Cont.

Original Dodecad	Extant Dodecad (Winnefeld)
87	XXXIX
88	
89	
90	
91	
92	XL
93	XLI
94	XLII
95	
96	
97	
98	
99	
100	
101	
102	
103	
104	XLIII
105	XLIV
106	XLV
107	
108	
109	
110	
111	
112	
113	
114	
115	
116	
117	
118	XLVI
119	XLVII
120	XLVIII
121	XLIX
122	
123	
124	
125	
126	
127	
128	
129	

Table 2. Cont.

Original Dodecad	Extant Dodecad (Winnefeld)
130	
131	
132	
133	L
134	LI
135	LII
136	
137	
138	
139	
140	
141	
142	
143	
144	
145	
146	

Table 3. Original Dodecads 135-146

	135 =LII	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146
R I	q135.1	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake
R II	q134.2	q135.2	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake
R III	q133.3	q134.3	q135.3	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake
R IV	q132.4	q133.4	q134.4	q135.4	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake
R V	q131.5	q132.5	q133.5	q134.5	q135.5	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake
R VI	q130.6	q131.6	q132.6	q133.6	q134.6	q135.6	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake
R VII	q129.7	q130.7	q131.7	q132.7	q133.7	q134.7	q135.7	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake
R VIII	q128.8	q129.8	q130.8	q131.8	q132.8	q133.8	q134.8	q135.8	Fake	Fake	Fake	Fake
R IX	q127.9	q128.9	q129.9	q130.9	q131.9	q132.9	q133.9	q134.9	q135.9	Fake	Fake	Fake
R X	q126.10	q127.10	q128.10	q129.10	q130.10	q131.10	q132.10	q133.10	q134.10	q135.10	Fake	Fake
R XI	q125.11	q126.11	q127.11	q128.11	q129.11	q130.11	q131.11	q132.11	q133.11	q134.11	q135.11	Fake
R XII	q124.12	q125.12	q126.12	q127.12	q128.12	q129.12	q130.12	q131.12	q132.12	q133.12	q134.12	q135.12

=I, II, III, etc. Winnefeld, Dodecad I, II, III, etc.

q question

R Response

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SORTE UNICA PRO CASIBUS PLURIBUS ENOTATA
LITERARY TEXTS AND LOT INSCRIPTIONS AS
SOURCES FOR ANCIENT KLEROMANCY

CRISTIANO GROTTANELLI

I. Types of Divination and Types of Evidence

In the ancient world, trance divination and divination by throwing dice or by drawing lots (kleromancy) were two of the most important mantic systems.¹ Although the former type has received much attention both during antiquity and in modern speculation,² while the latter has too often been ignored by ancient and modern authorities,³ these two kinds may be usefully compared, because trance divination is the clearest and most important example of what Cicero's treatise *De divinatione* (I. 34) called "non-technical divination" (*divinatio quae arte caret*), while kleromancy (*sors*) is presented by that author, and in the same passage, as a peculiar type of "extreme divination." As two very different, and thus in a way complementary, types, trance and lot-drawing were sometimes associated, as was possibly the case

¹ Both systems are considered in David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983), 26, 36, 86 (trance prophecy), and 25, 30-32 (lot oracles) respectively. Already in Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, 4 volumes (Paris 1879-1882), both systems were discussed, respectively in vol. I, 344-77 (trance), and vol. I, 188-97, vol. IV, 145-59 (lot oracles). As for Cicero's treatment of divination, see Mary Beard, "Cicero and Divination: The Formation of a Latin Discourse," *Journal of Roman Studies* 76 (1986): 33-46. On kleromancy, the contributions of Fritz Graf and William E. Klingshirn in this volume are important.

² The bibliography is huge; here I wish to quote only two important essays, pointing in opposite directions: Eric R. Dodds, "Supernormal Phenomena in Classical Antiquity" (1957), now in *The Ancient Concept of Progress and Other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief* (Oxford, 1973), 156-210, and Wesley D. Smith, "So-called Possession in Pre-Christian Greece," *Transactions of the American Philological Society* 96 (1965): 403-26. I tend to agree with Dodds, but of course I do not share his "psychical" presuppositions.

³ As explained by Cristiano Grottanelli, "La clérômancie ancienne et le dieu Hermès," in Federica Cordano and Cristiano Grottanelli, eds., *Sorteggio pubblico e cleromanzia dall'antichità all'età moderna* (Milano, 2001), 155-58 (henceforward: *Sorteggio pubblico*).

at Delphi, the most famous ancient oracular shrine, where both are attested.⁴

From the point of view of historians trying to unravel the problems of ancient divination, the less noble among these two types has a great advantage over the other. For trance divination is attested only by ancient texts written by various types of *literati*—treatises, geographical descriptions, historical narratives, epic poems, novels and other forms of ancient fiction—while divination by the drawing of lots is presented by the same texts or kinds of texts, but also attested by objects used for such “extreme” practices, and, in particular, by inscribed objects of various shapes and dimensions, known as *tesserae* or *sortes*, which were extracted from a vessel in order to divine. This double nature of the evidence for lot kleromancy means that such mantic practice may be studied both 1) from the point of view of ancient intellectuals and 2) by using materials—and small texts—directly expressing the values and techniques of the practice itself.

In the present paper, I shall attempt to glance at both aspects of this rich evidence. I shall begin by quoting the descriptions and/or the evaluations of lot divination presented by two Latin authors: the philosopher and politician Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE), in Section 2, and the rhetorician and Platonist philosopher Lucius Apuleius (*floruit* 155 CE) in Sections 3 and 4, and by comparing the respective attitudes in Section 5. Then I shall look at some inscribed *sortes* of a place and date comparable to those of the two intellectuals, which attest the practice of lot divination directly. A short comparison between the judgements expressed by the two intellectuals and the ideology and behaviour illustrated by the inscribed objects shall follow (Section 6). Finally (Section 7), I shall discuss a caricature of such oracular inscriptions, presented by a third intellectual, Aulus Gellius (*circa* 130-180 CE), the erudite author of the *Noctes Atticae*. I hope to show that, though the interpretations, evaluations and descriptions of kleromancy by intellectuals should not be simply taken as evidence of popular beliefs and practices, there is a strong connection between kleromancy as attested by the direct evidence of inscribed *sortes* on one side and the opinions of *literati* on the other. In their treatises or in

⁴ This has been noted at least since Bouché-Leclercq (see above, n. 1). For lot-drawing at Delphi, see most recently Massimo Di Salvatore, “Il sorteggio fra politica e religione. Un caso tessalico,” in *Sorteggio pubblico*, 119-30.

their fiction, ancient intellectuals such as Cicero, Apuleius, and Gellius viewed the actual practice of lot divination through the lenses of their own philosophical perspectives, and the comparison between literary descriptions and the short texts of actual *tesserae* helps to evaluate the ways in which popular beliefs and behaviours were envisaged and transformed by the elite in the context of a complex class society, rich in social contradictions.

II. *Cicero on sortes*

In his *De divinatione*, Cicero mentions *sortes* both in the first book, containing the description and defence of divination, attributed to his brother Quintus, who shares the Stoa's positive evaluation of that art, and in the second book, in which an attack against that practice is presented as the author's response to his brother. At I. 34, Quintus says:

The use of *sortes* is not to be despised, especially if the *sortes* possess the authority that comes from old age, as is the case with those that we received when they were taken from the earth. And if, when they are drawn by chance, they form a discourse that possesses a meaning, I think this happens by the will of the gods. In my opinion, among all men the interpreters of such *sortes* are the nearest to the gods, just as the philologists are the nearest to the poets (whose discourse they are able to interpret).

This statement contains the central idea of kleromancy, the type of divination that is based upon drawing lots: the interpretation of the results of what could be considered a chance happening as the expression of divine will. This is expressed by the sentence *sortes [...]* *quae tamen ductae ut in rem apte cadant fieri credo posse divinitus* ("lots [...] which, when they are drawn by chance, form a discourse that possesses a meaning, by the will of the gods"). The authority that comes from age is a mere addition to this general principle; and in this case it is referred specifically to the sanctuary of the goddess Fortuna near the Latin town of Praeneste, where divination was practiced in Cicero's time with *sortes* that were said to have been dug up out of the earth in time immemorial. It is to this same sanctuary that Cicero refers in the second book of the treatise, where he attacks lot divination most disparagingly (II. 85-87):

Do you think we should speak of *sortes*? What, indeed, is a *sors*? It is more or less the same as playing *morra*, or dice, or knucklebones: things

which are totally based upon temerity and chance, not upon reasoning or reflection. And the whole (type of divination) is an invention that is meant to deceive, in order to make money or to foment superstition or to induce error.

I think the two statements, attributed respectively to Quintus and to Marcus Tullius Cicero, should be envisaged as symmetrically opposed: Quintus saw the way in which the *sortes* were extracted as regulated by divine will (*divinitus*), while Marcus exclaimed that the extraction was governed by chance (*casus*). This is, in every context, the ambiguity of kleromancy that makes it a paradoxical mode of divination. As for the specific traits of kleromancy discussed in this second passage, once more Cicero refers to the sanctuary of Fortuna in Praeneste. Here I shall quote only one aspect of that oracle, stressed by Marcus Tullius Cicero in order to ridicule the local lot divination (II. 86):

What can be reliable in these *sortes*, that are mixed together and then extracted by a child's hand, and by order of the goddess Fortuna?

The use of a child to draw the lots, that is coherent with the association between divination and purity, and attested also for the more modest form of divination by lots practiced in the streets (cf. Tibullus, I. 3, 9-13), is used by Cicero to discredit the *sortes* even further by showing that they are not only play, but child's play.⁵ In a way, he is saying that, though the sanctuary in Praeneste is very old, as his brother has pointed out, the person who draws lots in that cultic place is so young he or she is not even a person. As for the games of chance (the games referred to in French as *jeux de hasard*) specifically mentioned in *De divinatione* II. 85, they are important because a couple of them (dice and knucklebones) were actually used for other forms of kleromancy.

⁵ On using children for divining with lots, see Cristiano Grottanelli, "Bambini e divinazione," in Ottavia Niccoli, ed., *Infanzie* (Firenze 1993), 23-72; and idem, "Il gioco e la sorte: Sulla filastrocca del re in Roma antica," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 62 (1996): 237-46. Other types of divination with children: Sarah Iles Johnston, "Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination," *Arethusa* 34 (2001): 97-117.

III. *Apuleius' Two Types of Pseudo-divination: a) Pseudotrance and b) Pseudokleromancy*

Sometime between 155 and 180 of the Common Era, Apuleius of Madaura—the rhetorician and philosopher who, in the year 154 or 155, had been accused of practicing magic, and had defended him-self so well as to be acquitted—wrote the novel *Metamorphoses*, better known as *The Golden Ass*, based upon a previous Greek narrative, a famous version of which is commonly attributed to Lucian of Samosata (circa 115-80 CE). In the ninth book of the Latin novel, the protagonist, Lucius, who had been turned into an ass at the very beginning of the story, is bought by a group of devotees of the Syrian Goddess.⁶ These votaries, depicted as a lot of effeminate charlatans,⁷ are presented as practicing two different types of bogus divination. In the last eight chapters of Book Eight and in the first seven chapters of Book Nine, they pretend to practice *vaticinatio* by dancing, by inflicting wounds upon themselves, and by simulating trances presented as the proof of divine possession. In the eighth chapter of Book Nine, they tell fortunes by drawing lots, and they cheat by using only one lot (*sors unica*). These two deceitful behaviours are not detected by the country folk who crowd around the devotees and pay for their alleged mantic responses. Apparently, the votaries are successful and make good money. But, in both cases, their fortune does not last long, and (respectively in VIII. 29 and in IX. 9-10) they are caught *in flagranti* as they commit other misdeeds.

The description of the mock-sortition invented by the votaries is found in Book Nine, Chapter 8. This is the relevant passage:

⁶ On the Phrygian Goddess's castrated votaries, see Philippe Borgeaud, *La mère des dieux: De Cybèle à la Vierge Marie* (Paris 1996), 70-87; 132-150; on the Syrian Goddess's *galloi*, *ibidem*, 238-39. On castration in Antiquity, C. Grottanelli, "Faithful Bodies: Ancient Greek Sources on Oriental Eunuchs," in Albert I. Baumgarten, Jan Assmann and Guy Stroumsa, eds., *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience* (Leiden, Boston, and Köln 1998), 404-16.

⁷ On these votaries and their trance sessions in connection with divination, see Cristiano Grottanelli, "Possessed Transsexuals in Antiquity: A Double Transformation," in David Shulman and G. Stroumsa, eds., *Self and Self-Transformation in the History of Religions* (New York and Oxford 2002), 91-105. I have dealt with Apuleius' effeminate devotees from a different perspective (as thieves and tricksters) in my article "Tricksters, Scapegoats, Champions, Saviors," *History of Religions* 23 (1985): 117-33.

Between them the pious frauds composed an all-purpose oracle [...] and used it to cheat a great many people who came to consult [them] on all sorts of questions (*Sorte unica pro casibus pluribus enotata consulentes de rebus variis plurimos ad hunc modum cavillantur*). It ran (*Sors haec erat*):

“Yoke the oxen, plough the land / High the golden grain will stand”
(*Ideo coniuncti terram proscindunt boves, / ut in futurum laeta germinent sata*).

Suppose a man came to ask [...] whether he ought to marry. The answer was plain: he ought to take the yoke of matrimony and raise a fine crop of children. Or suppose that he wanted to know whether he ought to buy land: the yoked oxen and the good harvests were quite to the point. Or suppose it was about going on a business trip: the oxen, the least restless of all beasts, were to be yoked and the golden grain spelt a prosperous return. Or suppose a soldier was warned for active service, or a constable ordered to join in the pursuit of bandits: the priests explained the oracle as meaning that he should put the necks of his enemies under the yoke and reap a rich harvest when the time came for the loot, or booty, to be divided among the victors.

The multiple symbolic values of one short text need not detain us here. It is more important to understand what the *sors unica* was and how it was marked (*enotata*) with the text in question.⁸ Apuleius is clearly referring to kleromancy, and more specifically to the system known in the Roman tradition as *sors* (“lot,” and thus “fate” or “destiny”). The *sors* mentioned in this passage was a small object with a short inscription, and such objects, of various materials and shapes, were used for a specific type of kleromancy, which is well known today thanks to the recent works of Jacqueline Champeaux. The inscribed pebbles, metal lamellae, etc., known as *sortes* were kept in containers, also of various materials and forms, and drawn out at random, often by a child: the inscription was taken to be the mantic response to the

⁸ On divination with *sortes* in ancient Italy, see Jacqueline Champeaux, *Fortuna: Recherches sur le culte de la Fortune à Rome I* (Rome 1982); Eadem, *Fortuna: Recherches sur le culte de la Fortune à Rome II* (Rome 1987); Eadem, “Oracles institutionnels et formes populaires de la divination italique,” *Caesarodunum* suppl. 54 (*La divination dans le monde étrusco-italique II*), 90-113; Eadem, “Sur trois passages de Tite-Live (21, 62, 5 et 8, 22, 1, 11): les “sorts” de Caere et de Faléries,” *Philologus* 133 (1989): 63-74; Eadem, “*Sors oraculi*: les oracles en Italie sous la république et l’empire,” *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome. Antiquité* 102 (1990): 271-302; Eadem, ““Sors” et divination inspirée. Pour une préhistoire des oracles italique,” *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome. Antiquité* 102 (1990): 801-28; Paolo Poccetti, ““Fata canit folisque notat et nomina mandat.” Scrittura e forme orcolari nell’Italia antica,” in Ileana Chirassi Colombo, Tullio Seppilli, eds., *Sibille e linguaggi orcolari: Mito Storia Tradizione. Atti del Convegno Macerata-Norcia settembre 1994* (Macerata, Italy, 1998), 75-105; Giovanna Bagnasco Gianni, “Le sortes etrusche,” in *Sorteggio pubblico*, 197-220.

question asked by the consultant. Obviously, in this type of divination the container must hold several inscribed objects, so that the drawing out of one or more of the mantic lots may express the will of the gods and reveal the unknown. To enclose only one inscribed lot (*sors unica*) in the container is thus deception, and deception of a particularly cynical and blasphemous type.

The section of the story centered upon the *sors unica* is concluded by an account of sacrilegious theft committed by the devotees who steal a golden cup belonging to the Phrygian Mother of the Gods, with the excuse of conducting a solemn service in her temple behind closed doors. The thieves are overtaken by a body of armed horsemen who are searching for the holy object, and are thrown in jail because the cup is found in the pockets of the Syrian Goddess's robes (IX. 9-10).⁹

The connection between the sacrilegious theft and the bogus divination by drawing one lot is easily understood only if one keeps in mind that the votaries steal the Phrygian Goddess's golden cup by pretending to perform a secret ritual (*simulatione sollemnium, quos in opertum factitaverant*). Both misdeeds are presented as a dishonest way of acquiring wealth under the pretence of accomplishing a secret and holy ritual. As in the case of the mock-possession, the mock-sortition of the wandering *cinaedi* does not pay in the end, and they are justly punished, not directly for cheating their clients, but for crimes connected with their fraud.

IV. *Two Different Intellectuals*

Cicero's discussion of kleromancy in his treatise is both well argued and complete, even though he actually mentions only one specific subtype of kleromancy, the drawing of inscribed *sortes*, and does so by quoting only one example of that type, that practiced at the oracular sanctuary of Fortuna in Praeneste. And, though, in his novel that was written two centuries later, Apuleius expressed no explicit judgement on the mode of divination by *sortes*, the caricature of that mode presented by his novel partly resembles Cicero's evaluation of

⁹ This episode is discussed, in a comparative perspective, as a *topos* found in Hellenistic novels and in biblical narrative, in Cristiano Grottanelli, *Kings and Prophets: Monarchic Power, Inspired Leadership, and Sacred Text in Biblical Narrative* (New York and Oxford 1999), 154-56.

the same subtype in the Second Book of *De divinatione*. Apuleius tells of a gang of rascals deceiving and exploiting the country folk with *sors unica*; Cicero had spoken of *sortes* as of a *res inventa fallaciis* [...] *ad quaestum*. But if we compare the two texts carefully, we find that Apuleius' description of the Syrian Goddess's votaries as impudent charlatans corresponds even more closely to the last words of Quintus' speech at the end of Book One (I.132), where Cicero's brother, after having defended divination, declares:

I distrust vulgar lot-drawers or those who divine for a fee, or those who evoke the dead, to whom your friend Appius was addicted. [...] These are not diviners endowed with knowledge and experience, but "superstitious prophets and impudent charlatans, incapable or insane or driven by need: people who are not able to find their own paths but presume to show the way to others. From those to whom they promise riches, they ask a penny. Let them take a penny as a prize only as they give us the riches they have promised!"

By quoting Ennius' venerable condemnation of wandering diviners, and by beginning his own list of untrustworthy holy men with lot-drawers (*sortilegos*), Quintus adopts the traditional attitude of many Hellenistic and Roman intellectuals who despise the low-bred specialists of the sacred working in the streets. In this, he differs little from Apuleius, who continues the same tradition when he condemns the effeminate rascals serving their Oriental goddess. But in spite of all these common traits, Cicero's attitude in the Second Book of his treatise may not simply be identified with those of Quintus in the First Book, of Apuleius, and possibly of Ennius, because Cicero is *critical of divination in general*, and so scornful of kleromancy, the most absurd type of divination, that he attacks even the ancient, famous and popular shrine of a goddess where that form of divination is practiced.

In his novel, Apuleius implicitly passes judgement on the role played in the narrative by the two types of divination he describes. It is clear that both practices, in the form presented by *The Golden Ass*, are valued negatively, but this evaluation refers to *the specific way* in which each is practiced by the charlatans so scorchingly caricatured by the writer. So it is correct to state that not *vaticinatio* and *sortes*, but the mock-*vaticinatio* and the mock-*sortes* of the Syrian Goddess's devotees, are the object of Apuleius' scorn. Although this is true, Apuleius goes further in his criticism of the *furor* simulated by the self-abusing rascal at the beginning of his description. He actually denies that the *furor* in question is

authentic, because he does not believe that “divine immanency, instead of doing men good, enfeebles or disorders their senses”. I shall not dwell on this important statement, which marks a peculiar deviation from the Platonic reading of trance and related phenomena.¹⁰ I shall simply state that, in the present context, Apuleius’ explicit attitude to divine frenzy is meaningful if compared to his silence on the general value of divination by lots outside the specific case he describes. In turn, this silence is meaningful if one compares it to the very explicit discussion of *sortes* in Cicero’s treatise.

This specific difference between the attitudes of Cicero and of Apuleius respectively towards the practice of kleromancy (an explicit and scornful condemnation in the first case, the description of a ridiculous extreme case of *simulated* sortition in the second) is the result, and a useful symptom, of the radical difference between those authors, that is in turn a symptom of a radical distinction between two types of intellectuals and between two historical periods. In pointing out these differences, I find it useful to turn to Michael von Albrecht’s *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (1992).¹¹ In the fifth chapter of his second volume, von Albrecht wrote:

Apuleius is not a philosopher in the full sense of the term. His philosophical writings are not rigorously scientific, and may be taken as documenting the penetration of religion in the field of philosophy. The author presents himself as a representative of the so-called “second sophistic”, as a hybrid between a *homo religiosus*—an “African Socrates”—and a *show-man*. If we compare him to Cicero the Academic, the transformation of Platonism from the age of Cicero to the second century CE appears clearly: *skepsis* has become less important, while faith has become pre-eminent. Religious life is now the ultimate and appeasing end of philosophical speculation.

By examining the different attitudes of the author of *De divinatione*, of Cicero’s brother Quintus as presented in the treatise, and of Apuleius, we have thus found that very similar attitudes to kleromancy

¹⁰ The main text is the *Phaedrus* (244a-45c) with Socrates’ description of the various types of *mania*. The bibliography is huge; here I quote only Eric R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1951), 64-103, Chapter 3, “The Blessing of Madness;” Gilbert Rouget, *La musique et la transe*, second edition (Paris 1990), 341-408; and Roberto Velardi, *Enthousiasmos: Possessione rituale e teoria della comunicazione poetica in Platone* (Roma 1989).

¹¹ Michael von Albrecht, *Geschichte des Römischen Literatur: Von Andronicus bis Boethius*, Vol. II (Bern-München 1992), 1158.

as a “popular” and “vulgar” type of divination coexist within widely different, or even opposite, attitudes to religious matters in general, and to divination as a religious way of obtaining knowledge of the unknown. But I must add that for Cicero the “popular” and “vulgar” quality of kleromancy is *not just an additional aspect* of the case against that form of divination, which he obviously considered a particularly absurd type of that absurd practice. Cicero’s attitude towards that specific aspect is expressed most clearly by the rhetorical question in *De divinatione* II. 87:

But what magistrate, what man endowed with a certain prestige makes use of *sortes*? (*Quis enim magistratus aut quis vir inlustrior utitur sortibus?*)

If we wish to understand the value of such an aspect of divination by lots, we should keep in mind that for Cicero the fact that kleromancy was not practiced by magistrates is central, because it means not only that lot divination is *vulgar*, but also, much more meaningfully, that it is *a private*, and not a State (*not a political*) practice. This, in turn, is most important, because Cicero was profoundly aware of the political quality of some divination practices (in particular, augury). Indeed, it is striking that, although Cicero was a magistrate of the Roman State as well as a critical intellectual, this official quality of his interfered very little with his philosophical views (with his *skepsis*, to use Michael von Albrecht’s expression) on the type of divination known as augury. Even more so, it is reasonable to infer that, in judging another type of divination, kleromancy, considered by all a merely private (and therefore “popular,” and “vulgar”) affair, practiced at best in a sanctuary of Praeneste and not in the official context of Roman political life, no problem of intellectual integrity and personal coherence could arise, and the “skeptical” attack could well be wholly unambiguous.

V. *Practicing Kleromancy: The Meaning of Some Inscribed Sortes*

So far, I have tried to show how two ancient intellectuals, Cicero and Apuleius, reflected—with profoundly different presuppositions but with a common snobbish attitude—on a subtype of kleromancy. The texts produced by the two *literati* provide more information about their authors’ ideological stances than about mantic sortition. But—as I have already stated—it is possible to turn from such reflections and discussions to a glimpse of the actual practice, thanks to a series of inscribed metal objects that were surely used as *sortes* for lot-divination

and should be dated to a period ranging from Republican times to the early Imperial Age.¹² I speak only of a *glimpse* of the actual practice of divination because the objects we possess come from chance discoveries, not from archaeological excavations, and it is thus impossible to reconstruct their context. This kind of evidence does not really allow us to understand how these *sortes* were used: e.g., how many were kept in each container, how they were placed, extracted and read. All we can reconstruct is the material they were made of, their shape and size, and the meaning of the inscription traced on each surface.

I do not intend to offer a complete study of these objects—not even a complete list of the twenty-four available Latin inscriptions. I shall just discuss a few examples, drawn from a series of seventeen inscriptions on rectangular bronze lamellae, found in early modern times in a place indicated by Mommsen as “Bahareno della montagna”, and possibly corresponding to Barbarano, between the towns of Vicenza and Padova in North-Eastern Italy. Only three of these objects are still extant: two are kept in the National Archaeological Museum, Florence, and one is now in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris. I shall examine some of these inscriptions in order to compare the information they offer with the picture of lot divination drawn by the texts I have discussed. And I shall begin with one important item of the epigraphic evidence, which corresponds rather well to a characteristic trait of Apuleius’ story of the single lot used by the charlatans. This is the inscription classified by Mommsen as *CIL* I² 2183:

Laetus lubens petito quod / dabitur gaudebis semper

This can be interpreted as a positive omen: E.H. Warmington seems to have chosen this interpretation in his *Remains of Old Latin*, 1940,¹³ because he translates “Seek you joyfully and willingly, and you will be glad forever, because of what you have been given”. But I prefer to interpret the two lines as Carlo Carena did in his little book *Iscrizioni latine arcaiche*, 1954:¹⁴ “Contento, spontaneamente chiedi ciò che ti

¹² For a catalogue and for the critical treatment of these inscriptions, I have availed myself of the unpublished dissertation of a student of mine in the University of Pisa: Patrizia Cascinelli, *La divinazione per mezzo delle sortes nell'Italia antica* (diss., Pisa, 1995).

¹³ E. H. Warmington, *Remains of Old Latin Newly Edited and Translated*, vol. IV: *Archaic Inscriptions* (London, 1940), 246-48.

¹⁴ Carlo Carena, *Iscrizioni latine arcaiche* (Firenze 1954), 28-29, 81-82. The problematic interpretation of this *sort* points to the connection between riddles and oracles,

verrà dato: non rimarrai mai deluso,” i.e. “Happily and spontaneously, ask for what you shall be given: you shall be forever happy.” If this interpretation is correct, the little text means that one should like what one gets, not that one can get what one likes. This would seem a bad joke: a cruel way of mocking the person who put a question to the oracle.

The collection includes no other inscriptions of the same kind; indeed, some real answer to the questioning is often provided. The short texts that tell the faithful not to trust other humans (e.g. *CIL* I² 2180: *Homines multi sunt / credere noli*, or *CIL* I² 2174: *Credis quod deicunt non / sunt ita ne fore stultu*) are also meant to dispel the false belief or suspicion that had induced them to put their question to the oracle. Others are surely negative answers (I quote only a more direct type, saying the faithful’s desire may not be fulfilled, and a less direct one, saying it is now too late to resort to the oracle: respectively *CIL* I² 2177: *Est equos perpulcer sed tu / vehi non potes istoc*, and *CIL* I² 2189: *Qur petis postempus consilium / quod rogas non est*).

Three of the *sortes* from Bahareno have inscriptions that juxtapose a protasis to an apodosis, thus announcing the consequences of the faithful’s wisdom or folly, or of their obedience or disobedience to the oracle. *CIL* I² 2175 says: *De incerto certa ne fiant / si sapis caveas*, and Warmington’s translation is, “If you are wise, about uncertainty beware lest things become certain”.¹⁵ *CIL* I² 2181 says: *Hostis incertus de certo nisi caveas* (Warmington: “An untrustworthy foe will arise from a trustworthy man, unless you take care”;¹⁶ but this translation is not wholly convincing). *CIL* I² 2182 says: *Iubeo et is ei si fecerit / gaudebit semper* (Warmington: “I command it, and if he does it, he will be glad forever”), and the expression *gaudebit semper* corresponds to the last part of the inscription *CIL* I² 2183 discussed above. These short texts do not really provide mantic responses: it would be more correct to state that they offer advice, that they give orders, or that they express warnings. The same may be said of the most ancient inscribed *sors* found in Italy. I refer to the *sors* of the Fiesole Museum, a large round pebble with a Latin inscription on its flat surface.¹⁷ The inscription

as discussed by Pietro Pucci, *Enigma segreto oracolo* (Pisa-Roma 1996), and Peter Struck in this volume.

¹⁵ Warmington, *Remains of Old Latin* (cited above, n. 13), 246-48.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 248.

¹⁷ See Margherita Guarducci, “Ancora sull’antica *sors* della Fortuna e di Servio Tullio,” *Rendiconti dell’Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, s. VIII, 27 (1972): 183-89. See also

(*se cedues, perdere nolo: ni ceduas, Fortuna Servios perit*, “If you yield, I will not ruin you: if you do not yield, [remember that] because of Fortuna, Servius was lost”) is dated by most scholars to the third century before the Common Era. It probably refers to the traditional story of the Roman king Servius Tullius, a worshipper of the goddess Fortuna who became a monarch, and finally lost his power and his life, owing to the capricious behaviour of two royal women.¹⁸

I think it is possible to summarize the contents of these oracular inscriptions as follows. The inscriptions may contain answers to questions put to the oracle, and such answers belong to five different types: 1) answers actually mocking the questioners, 2) answers telling the questioners they have put the question badly, and announcing that no answer is available, 3) negative answers, always vague, and sometimes ambiguous, 4) equally vague, and often ambiguous, positive answers, 5) responses that are not really answers, because they merely tell the questioners to behave well and to abide by the warnings and commands given by the oracle. The responses of the fifth type are often expressed by a protasis followed by an apodosis. Among all these types of answers, only types 3) and 4) actually address the questions put to the oracle, but they are too vague and/or too ambiguous to be used as trustworthy divine responses. In spite of all this, the very fact that several such small oracular texts have been found shows that this type of divination was rather successful between late Republican and early Imperial times, while the *sors* referring to Servius proves that it was already practiced at least three centuries before the Common Era.

VI. *Mocking Oracular Practice: Aulus Gellius's Caricature of a Responsum*

It is thus possible to state that oracular practice by drawing lots, as attested by inscriptions on mantic *tesserae*, explains and partly justifies the ironic treatment of divination by intellectuals, but does not correspond precisely to the mocking descriptions of learned writers. Yet

my article, “Il gioco e la sorte,” cited above, n. 11, especially pp. 242-46.

¹⁸ On these traditions about Servius Tullius in connection with the *sors* published by Guarducci, see Cristiano Grottanelli, “Servio Tullio, la Fortuna e l'Oriente,” *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 3rd Series, 5 (1987): 71-110. On various traditional accounts of Servius Tullius: Timothy J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000-264 B.C.)* (London and New York 1995), 142-50, 173-97, and *passim*.

one particularly absurd oracular *responsum* presented by a paradoxical passage in the *Noctes Atticae* (III. 3, 7-8) of Aulus Gellius, an erudite contemporary of Apuleius, seems strikingly similar to some of the inscriptions I have examined so far. In discussing a comedy that he attributes to Plautus, Gellius writes:

I have transcribed two verses from that comedy, when I was inquiring about the oracle of Arretium (or: about the oracle of Iuppiter Ammon): “This is the *responsum* of Arretium (or: of Iuppiter Ammon), that is said during the Ludi Magni: ‘I shall die if I don’t do this; if I do this, I shall be flogged’” (*Ex qua duo hos versus exscripsimus, ut historiam. queareremus oraculi Arretini: “Nunc illud est, quod ‘responsum Arreti’ ludis magnis dicitur: / ‘Peribo, si non fecero, si faxo, vapulabo’*”).

Whether the textual fragment quoted by Gellius refers to an oracular sanctuary of Arretium (Arezzo) in Tuscany or to the famous oracle of Iuppiter Ammon in Lybia, in any case the *responsum* given here, structured as a double sequence of protasis plus apodosis, presents a paradoxical choice between *two negative outcomes*, the first of which (death, expressed by *peribo*) shall come to pass *if (a certain) action is not accomplished*, while the second (a severe flogging, expressed by *vapulabo*) is said to be *the consequence of (that) action*.¹⁹

It is thus possible to find in a miscellaneous text by an ancient author, Gellius (*circa* 130-180 CE), possibly quoting another ancient author (Plautus, *circa* 250-184 BCE), an oracular formula that resembles the formulae attested by inscriptions on objects used as *sortes*. In that text, the characteristic structure of the apodosis-protasis sequence is stressed, and the somewhat unsatisfactory quality of that type of *responsum*, as attested by the inscribed *sortes* I have presented, becomes a rhetorical monstrosity and the very symbol of a hopeless situation. The relationship between the inscriptions I have discussed and the *responsum* quoted by Gellius (and possibly by Plautus) may be compared to the relationship between the reticence or ambiguity of the inscribed formulae from Bahareno and Apuleius’ story of the *sors unica casibus pluribus enotata*. Literary imagination plays with the data of real life, that are often absurd, to shape further and stronger absurdities.

¹⁹ On the structure and meaning of this imaginary *responsum*, in the context of lot inscriptions and of the logic of lot-drawing in ancient Roman culture, see Champeaux, “*Sors oraculi*: Les oracles en Italie sur la République et l’Empire,” cited above, note 8, especially pp. 292-93, and notes 40-42, with further bibliography; and Grottanelli, “Il gioco e la sorte,” (cited above, n. 5), especially 240-46.

It thus seems correct to state that, since the supposed mantic texts or the alleged practice of divination presented by the two second-century CE intellectuals (and perhaps already by the third-century BCE author of the comedy examined by Gellius) are not actually attested by the archaeological and epigraphical evidence, they are “true” only in the sense that they enlarge upon a real quality of the real practice of lot divination.

VII. *Intellectuals, Diviners, and the Superstitious Masses*

If we compare Apuleius’ *sors unica* to Gellius’ *responsum arretinum* against the background of the practice attested by the inscribed *sortes*, we shall see that the two intellectuals describe the mantic drawing of *sortes* in ways that push the actual lot divination of their times to two similar extremes. For a type of divination involving oracular inscriptions on *sortes* referring vaguely if not ambiguously to a successful outcome of various entreprizes, Apuleius substitutes a mock-divination practiced by using one *sors* and *one* inscription, vaguely referring to *all* possible successful outcomes. And for a type of divination using the rhetorical device of hypothetical discourse, based upon sequences of protasis and apodosis, in order to moralize instead of giving oracular answers, Gellius substitutes a *ridiculous oracular text* stating that *action or inaction respectively are followed each by a different kind of punishment*. This symmetry between the two different caricatures of the mantic drawing of lots shows that the two intellectuals criticized such practices according to similar mental processes, by stressing their inner contradictions and absurdities and thus by presenting them as paradoxical. By the same token, it shows that the picture they drew cannot be taken at its face value, and that, in order to reconstruct ancient kleromancy, the few extant *sortes* with their inscriptions are more trustworthy sources than the writings of *literati*.

It is obviously true that the oracular inscriptions on *sortes* show that lot-drawers cheated their superstitious clients, and even that they despised them and mocked them (as indicated by *CIL* 1² 2183, if my interpretation of that short text is correct). But the treatment of the subject by intellectuals from Cicero’s time to the age of Apuleius and Gellius shows not only that *literati* despised mantic drawers of lots, and that they accused them of cheating the superstitious—but also that they caricatured the devices and the rhetorical attitudes of such specialists in order to attack them as absurd. In this respect, the differ-

ences between attitudes to divination, and more in general to religious matters, stressed in my section 5, give way to class solidarity: their treatment of kleromancy proves that these intellectuals despised lot-drawing because it was a popular practice, favoured by the superstitious masses they eyed with contempt. In this respect, Cicero's attitude is perfectly consistent with the ideological stance of all the other authors I have quoted, although in other respects, as I have shown above, it must be carefully distinguished from those of his brother Quintus in the first book of *De divinatione*, of Apuleius, and of Gellius. I must add that this attitude seems particularly absurd to us today, if we consider that the drawing of lots for political decisions (e.g. for allotting provinces to members of the senatorial elite) was practiced precisely by the magistrates and by the prestigious citizens of the Roman state quoted by Cicero (*Quis enim magistratus aut quis vir inlustrior utitur sortibus?*) as never using kleromancy.²⁰ Obviously the *literati* considered the choosing of magistrates by lots (a way of distributing functions and power) and divination by lots (a way of seeing the invisible) as incommensurable activities. But the contradiction seems striking, and adds further complexities to the complex picture of ancient kleromancy.

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²⁰ Roman public sortition is discussed by Nathan Rosenstein, "Sorting Out the Lot in Republican Rome," *American Journal of Philology* 116 (1995): 43-75; and by Roberta Stewart, *Public Office in Early Rome: Ritual Procedure and Political Practice* (Ann Arbor 1998). On political sortition in the Roman world, see Eva Cantarella, "Introduzione," and Alberto Maffi, "Nomina per sorteggio degli ambasciatori nel mondo romano," both in *Sorteggio pubblico*, 15-17 and 137-138, respectively. The relationship between public sortition and kleromancy is the main theme addressed in *Sorteggio pubblico*: see especially my paper, "La clérémonie ancienne et de dieu Hermès," 155-96, with Thomas Aquinas' distinction between *sors divisoria* (the distribution of *res, honor, dignitas, poena, actio aliqua* by drawing lots) and *sors divinatoria* (*si quaeratur quid sit futurum*), pp. 156-57. The latest and best discussion of this subject is Sarah Iles Johnston, "Lost in the Shuffle: Roman Sortition and its Discontents," in Philippe Borgeaud and Francesca Prescendi (eds.) *Wissowa 2002: cent ans de religion romaine* (*Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 5 [2003]), 146-56.

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DIVINATION AND LITERARY CRITICISM?

PETER T. STRUCK

Introduction

As has long been recognized, in the *Poetics* Aristotle transposes into the study of literature conceptual schemes and tools from the study of rhetoric. The building blocks of his poetics are schemes of tropes, levels of style, figures of speech and thought, criteria of genre, which are analyzed with an eye toward mastering various methods of moving the emotions of an audience. Aristotle's construction of the field has been seen as so dominant by some scholars, including George Kennedy and at times D. A. Russell, that one is left with the impression that rhetoric was the only pool from which ancient readers of literature drew to assemble their approaches to literary criticism. But this view, according to which ancient critics were prone to seeing the poet as a figure like an orator, might leave us wondering whatever happened to another ancient view of the poets, undoubtedly our best-attested one.

Poetry and prophecy were mutually attracted from their earliest days. In the *Ion* Plato gives us one of our most famous statements of the phenomenon. He treats the poet and the prophet in perfect symmetry—clearly making light of both, but as is often stated in such contexts, we needn't ascribe sincerity to him to take him seriously as a witness to the common-sense notions of his contemporaries. This symmetry might lead us to wonder, If a sizeable number of people in the ancient poet's audience viewed the poet as a mantic figure, might we expect that at least some of them would have approached the poem with expectations and techniques of exposition that mirrored those they used to understand an oracle? I will here suggest that one group of ancient readers, the allegorists, did just that. These points of overlap will show that divination was more than an isolated field of practical knowledge for specialists, but served also as a pool of conceptual resources for other modes of thought. In other words, divinatory thinking expanded beyond divinatory practice. This study, then, is part of the project, called for by Jean-Pierre Vernant thirty years ago, to study "what type of rationality is expressed in the game

of divinatory procedure.”¹ In my view, while the social role of divination has received some attention in recent years, its place in ancient intellectual life has hardly begun to be understood.²

Since allegorists are not as well known as other ancient readers, a few general remarks might be helpful.³ Unlike its distant cousin, Medieval allegorical drama, ancient allegory is generally a practice of reading, not writing. These ancient readers focus lavishly on interpretive questions, and in marked contrast to Aristotelian critics, taken as a group they show a certain indifference to formalist analysis (with some of them interested in it, but some of them not). They introduce to Western criticism the distinction between a surface level of the text and an under-level where secret meanings lurk. More suggestive than Aristotle’s metaphors, the allegorists’ undermeanings (sometimes called ἀλληγορίαι or ὑπόνοιαι, but more often αἰνίγματα, and later σύμβολα) grow to remarkable proportions. According to the allegorical view, our appreciation of the workings of the poetic craft, and of the ways language produces its effects, will let us know only what the surface of, say, Homer’s text means. But deeper, more profound messages will always recede from our immediate understanding—these may have import for any number of areas of human life, but seem especially

¹ Jean-Pierre Vernant, “Parole et signes muets,” in Vernant, ed., *Divination et Rationalité* (Paris 1974), translated as “Speech and Mute Signs” in Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, Froma Zeitlin, ed. (Princeton 1991).

² Arguments in this article condense some material to be found in Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of their Texts* (Princeton 2004), 77-110 and 162-203. The paper was first presented at the University of Pennsylvania conference on “Greek and Roman Divination,” (April 2001) as those two chapters were coming into their full form.

³ Among the many relatively recent contributions to the study of allegorical commentary, see: Michael Murrin, *The Veil of Allegory* (Chicago 1969); James A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm* (Leiden 1976); Anne D. R. Sheppard, *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus’ Commentary on the Republic*, Hypomnemata, Heft 61 (Göttingen 1980); Murrin, *The Allegorical Epic* (Chicago 1980); Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley 1986); Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987); Glenn W. Most, “Cornutus and Stoic Allegoresis,” *ANRW* 2.36.3 (1989): 2014-65; David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley 1992); James I. Porter, “Hermeneutic Lines and Circles: Aristarchus and Crates on the Exegesis of Homer,” in Robert Lamberton and John J. Keaney, eds., *Homer’s Ancient Readers* (Princeton 1992), 67-114; Whitman, ed., *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period* (Leiden 2000), G. R. Boys-Stones, ed., *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition: Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions* (New York 2003), and Struck.

to concern the nature of the gods, the cosmos, and humans' place in relation to them. In other words, no matter how good we have become at recognizing tropes or levels of style, this kind of knowledge will only be a first step on our way to revealing the more profound meanings behind, for example, Odysseus' wanderings (that are really a search for knowledge); or the anvils that Zeus once hung from Hera's feet (that represent the land and the sea, which pull down the atmospheric air from the ethereal heavens); or the cave of the nymphs (which hints at the whole material world where things generate and decay); or the shield of Achilles (which represents the entire cosmos).

Of course some of their individual readings are clearly forced, but it is too much to conclude from this that the entire tradition is by definition forced reading (as some scholars do). Hera's anvils may no longer seem connected to the land and the sea, but the shield of Achilles still probably strikes most readers as more than just a shield. From at least Roman times, the allegorists' detractors have characterized them as reading into a poem what does not belong. According to an Epicurean character in Cicero's *De natura deorum*, the ancient Stoic allegorists committed the sin of anachronism and made Homer out to be a proto-Stoic, by enlisting him in support of their own ideas. While the charge is good polemic—on a par with one ancient caricature of the rhetorical critics as merely “quibbling about style”⁴—it is not the most enlightening thing we can say about allegorical strategies of reading. (What reader, after all, sees him- or herself as foisting ideas onto a text that do not belong?) Instead, if we look at the allegorists against a wider background of ancient literary commentary, we see in their works the development of a strictly hermeneutical, interpretive approach to poetry (in which Aristotle and his followers do not develop much interest). In a perhaps telling contrast, one of the most highly developed examples of allegorical criticism concerns the symbolic meanings of various features of Homer's “cave of the nymphs”—the cave on Ithaca into which the Phaeaceans unload Odysseus and his possessions when they arrive on shore. The 17 lines of Homer's text provoke the late antique allegorist Porphyry to a virtuoso performance of the allegorical genre, running over some 20 pages of detailed interpretive commentary. Aristotle does mention this scene, in a few lines of his *Poetics*, but his interest is rather more circumscribed to the question

⁴ See Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, 178.

of how it is that Odysseus could have been removed into the cave without waking up (1460b).

Even at first glance, three rather obvious points are worth making. First, and most generally, both allegorists and diviners are at root interpreters. They see their respective texts primarily as sources of hidden meanings, which need to be decoded to see the light of day.⁵ As we have mentioned and will reconsider in a moment, this already sets allegorists apart from rhetorically-minded readers of poetry, and puts them in closer proximity to diviners.⁶ If the rhetorical critic sees the poem as an instantiation of a craft that can be analyzed into that craft's unique specifications and rules, the allegorist sees the poem as a riddle to be solved. A rhetorical critic's strategy is typically one of isolating and investigating the methods by which a poet produces one effect or another. The allegorists do not usually do this. Instead, more like a diviner, they see their task as primarily one of decoding, or finding hidden meanings. In divination, as in allegorical literary commentary, these meanings typically have to do with some fundamental truth about the world, and the places of humans and gods within it.

Second, both allegorists and an important class of diviners (that is, oracle-readers) read texts that followed the same metrical constraints. The surviving evidence suggests that the lens of allegorism in its formative period was typically turned on the hexametric lines of Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus. Those who tried to decode pronouncements from Delphi would also have worked from a hexametric text. This means that the object of scrutiny was equally classifiable under the

⁵ Joseph Fontenrose's work *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley 1978) argues ingeniously that the oracles securely attested to Delphi, rather than the poetic tradition that surrounds it, are not at all ambiguous, and therefore do not provoke elaborate interpretive maneuvers. But his search for scientific criteria of authenticity led him to focus rather strongly on the epigraphical evidence (Fontenrose, 11-12). Of his list of 75 "genuine" oracles, 47 of them, or 63%, are secured by inscriptions. W. K. Pritchett, in *The Greek State at War* (Berkeley 1979), 3: 301-2, n. 22, is surely right to point out that this particular medium of transmission, while more useful for dating, surely had its own exigencies, and may very well not be representative of the kinds of words the oracle actually pronounced. In any case, my interest is in the intellectual structures that Greeks used to organize their views on oracles, for which the literary evidence is our best index.

⁶ This is of course not to overlook the point that very few of the allegorists practice only allegorical kinds of commentary. It is more often the case than not that allegorical readers demonstrate a facility with different approaches to their tasks as readers. The tract, *The Life of Homer*, ascribed to Plutarch, is a striking example of familiarity with many modes of reading.

term ἔπος. There were not overly abundant uses for dactylic hexameter in archaic and classical Greece. Christopher Faraone has found that hexameters play a role in magical spells in the archaic period.⁷ And Parmenides found the meter a proper mode of expressing his philosophical ideas. But hexameter was most strongly marked as the language of the oracle and of the epic poet.

The third obvious point has already been made. The poet-prophet axis was a central pillar in the traditional edifice of ancient views on poetry. To be sure, it was nuanced, modified, denatured into a literary trope, and even rejected by some, but it remained a remarkably durable view within the tradition. If people were in the habit of seeing their poets as *manteis*, even in only a vestigial way, it seems entirely plausible that at least some might be inclined to approach the poets' words with a batch of assumptions that was congruent to the batch that guided their approach to oracles. This is also not to claim that ancient allegorists actually subscribed to the traditional poet/prophet association. Some among the Neoplatonic allegorists hold such a view, the Stoics in general clearly did not, and among the allegorists of the classical period, the evidence on this issue is scant. But this is not a deterrent to the claim that allegorism developed by drawing on this association, and transposing conceptual categories from one field to the other. By the same token, it is doubtful that a rhetorical critic would have claimed the poet to be somehow coextensive with the orator. It is a different thing to claim that the poet is in certain limited respects *like* an orator, and that this affiliation suggests that the tools a reader uses to analyze one would yield results in analyzing the works of the other. I suggest that the borrowing from divination into allegorism happened in a similar way. Allegorists were highly sensitive to the capacity of fictive literature to carry multiple layers of significance. They knew from Delphi a tradition of reading hexametric lines that was attuned to similar densities of meaning, and so saw fit to import conceptual categories from it.⁸

⁷ Christopher Faraone, "Taking the Nestor's Cup Inscription Seriously: Conditional Curses and Erotic Magic in the Earliest Greek Hexameters," *Classical Antiquity* 15 (1996): 77-112.

⁸ If we can speculate a little further, it is also likely that the poet-prophet association—which made out the poet to be a light and winged thing, radiant with divine energy—would have been especially attractive to poets themselves. If this is the case, might not at least some poets have consciously modeled their writing along the lines

So allegorists and diviners share ties between the metrical nature of their texts (both are hexameters), the traditional views of the producers of their texts (both are mantic figures), and views of their own role as readers of their texts (both see themselves primarily as interpreters). These obvious affiliations are suggestive, but not much more than that. They prompt us to take a deeper look at the concepts that organize each field.

The Conceptual Language of Allegorism

The most common and enduring conceptual category within allegorical reading is not ἀλληγορία, which Plutarch says is a new term in his time,⁹ nor is it ὑπόνοια, which appears in a prominent location in Plato, but is not very prominent in the allegorical texts themselves. Among the terms of art that are used in allegoresis, the noun αἵνιγμα, commonly rendered “riddle,” and its cognates stand out. When the major allegorists make general descriptions of their views of poetry and their techniques of reading it, they reach for αἵνιγμα terms more consistently and prominently than any other.

A mutilated text found on a funeral pyre at Derveni preserves a good example of the prominence of enigma-vocabulary within allegorical commentary. This reader allegorizes an Orphic poem. I follow Professor Walter Burkert in dating it to around 400 BCE. There is no doubt that the enigma and its cognates are the commentator’s central organizing concept. The term appears a half dozen times in only about 200 lines of preserved text, and it appears in several cognate forms, as a noun, verb, adjective, and adverb, suggesting a highly developed

of oracles and consciously built in layers of significance, in subtle modes of reference? For a parallel, one could look at the influence of modernism as a theoretical apparatus on the production of literary work during the early 20th century. James Joyce shaped his own writing in full and ongoing conversation with a whole host of modernist notions. Of course the proof is in the pudding, as they say, and we would need to locate and explore specific ancient works and authors where such modeling happened. One contemporary scholar, Michael Murrin has made a convincing case for the influence of allegorical theory on the Vergil, claiming that he intentionally composed the *Aeneid* with allegorical associations built into it (see Murrin, *Allegorical Epic*, 3-25). Such a claim was possible because we can locate traditional allegorical readings that predate Vergil, and track them in Vergil’s own work. No such record of allegorical readings predates Homer, of course, so we would need to generate some other method to move from speculation on Homer’s intentions to something firmer.

idea. I give a translation of lines 5-6 from column XIII:¹⁰

Since he [the poet] riddles¹¹ concerning his subject matter throughout all his poem, it is necessary to discuss it word by word. [ὅτι μὲν πᾶ[σ]αν τὴν πόησιν περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων αἰνίζεται κ[α]θ' ἕπος ἕκαστον ἀνάγκη λέγειν]¹²

The prominence of enigma is already made clear here—this is one of the commentator's few explicit statements of method—and other sections of the text bear it out. Individual allegorical readings (cols. IX and XVII) use the term to mark figurative language that indicates a hidden meaning. Another text, lines 3-8 of column VII is worth a closer look:

And it is not possible to articulate the solution of the words, even though they are spoken. The poem is oracular (?) and riddling for humans. Orpheus did not mean to say in it riddles that are contestable, but rather great things in riddles. Indeed he speaks a holy language¹³ from the first all the way to the last word.

3 [κ]αὶ εἰπεῖν οὐχ οἶόν τε τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων
4 [λύ]σιν¹⁴ καίτ[οι] ρηθέντα. ἔστι δὲ [μαντική ἢ] πόησις
5 [κ]αὶ ἀνθρώποις αἰνί[γμ]ατώδης. [ὁ δ]ὲ [Ὀρφεύς] ἀντ[ή]ι
6 [ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμ]ατα οὐκ ἤθελε λέγειν, [ἐν αἰν]ίγμασ[ι]ν δὲ
7 [μεγ]άλα. ἱερ[ολογ]εῖται μὲν οὖν καὶ ἀ[πὸ το]ῦ πρώτου
8 [ἀεὶ] μέχρι οὗ [τελε]υταίου ῥήματος

This column contains difficulties. It has been suggested that the pieces

⁹ *De aud. po.* 19e-f.

¹⁰ In column numeration, I am following the translation produced in the Laks and Most volume (1997), which will (gods willing) be the definitive one. The *ΣΠΕ* text followed a different numeration, M. L. West made still another. For the text, I am working from the text produced by Tsantsanoglou in the Laks and Most volume for columns I-VIII and from the provisional *ΣΠΕ* text after that.

¹¹ I follow Jeffrey S. Rusten's reading of the term αἰνίζεται as being a variant of αἰνίττεται, and not from αἰνέω. ("Interim Notes on the Papyrus from Derveni," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, vol. 89 [Cambridge, Mass. 1985], 121-40). See, e.g. θαάζω for θαάσω at Soph. *OT* 2. Laks and Most's translation reflects such a reading also, see *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*, André Laks and Glenn W. Most, eds. (Oxford and New York 1997).

¹² Translations my own, though I have consulted the work of Laks and Most, and, in this passage, Rusten 1985, p. 133.

¹³ We lack early enough attestation of ἱερολογέω to be confident of its precise meaning here, however, a notion of oracular speech is surely sensible. Laks and Most opt for "uttering a holy discourse."

¹⁴ Following Tsantsanoglou and not Laks and Most. (See Laks and Most, p. 12)

on either side of the seam running from the suggested kappa of the initial καί to the suggested [τελε] of τελευταίου simply do not belong together.¹⁵ Regardless of this concern, the fragments of which this column VII is assembled show at least two, and more likely three, secure attestations of αἴνιγμα terms. This confirms the centrality of the enigma in this author's poetics. But it might also go further. In the lacuna I have here suggested μαντική ἥ, where Tsantsanoglou reads ξένη τις ἥ.¹⁶ Tsantsanoglou places the xi outside the brackets, though he calls it "admittedly quite uncertain." My interest in finding a *mantikē* here is obvious, but other reasons can also be found. The ἱερ[ολογ]εῖται is an unusual term which is otherwise unattested in the classical period. LSJ finds two uses for it in later Greek, one of which is to prophesy. Whatever it means, it combines the ideas of speech and the divine, marking it with divinatory concerns if not with divination itself. Though I have not seen the text, I have proposed this reading to Martin West who replied that he had already suggested μαντική ἥ in a letter to Tsantsanoglou in June 1984, and after checking the papyrus Tsantsanoglou replied that it fit perfectly. But turning back to our central riddle, there is no doubt that the enigma is the Derveni commentator's primary organizing concept. Considering that his fragmentary text consists of not much more than 1000 words, his frequency of use is unmistakable. It is also several orders of magnitude larger than in the more general surviving corpus from the classical period, where enigma terms are actually quite rare, as we will see in a moment.

This prominent placement of the enigma within allegorism is not isolated to the Derveni commentator. The idea recurs as a central conceptual category in many of the extant allegorical tracts for the next 1000 years. Such a consistency is noteworthy considering how different are these allegorical readers' basic assumptions about the world, and how far separated they are in time. The Derveni Papyrus

¹⁵ I thank Albert Henrichs for sharing his views with me on this issue. In discussion, he has pointed out difficulties with the syntax. The ῥηθέντα appears in the accusative though it seems to depend grammatically on the genitive plural τῶν ὀνομάτων, and the sense of middle ἱερ[ολογ]εῖται is difficult to discern. Until the official edition of the text appears a lengthy debate seems premature and following Tsantsanoglou, Laks, and Most seems the wisest course.

¹⁶ Tsantsanoglou adduces a parallel to Aristotle's comments on "riddles" in the *Poetics* (1458a) that I read quite differently, see below. See K. Tsantsanoglou, "The First Columns of the Derveni Papyrus," Laks and Most, p. 121.

commentator, the Stoic Cornutus from the 1st century CE, the author of the *Life of Homer* from sometime during the Roman period, and the great Neoplatonist Porphyry from the 3rd century CE, all set the enigma at or near the center of their poetics. As different as they are, these figures leave behind works that begin from the premise that the literary work is a riddle to be solved, that under scrutiny it will yield up profound wisdom about the basic truths of the cosmos and the place of humans and gods within it, and that the proper way to talk about these properties of the text is to embrace them under terms associated with αἴνιγμα.

Rhetorical Criticism

The poetics of the riddle in these texts could not be more out of step with what we know as the more “mainstream” rhetorical approaches to criticism. If we look for analogues in the works of Aristotle, Demetrius (the author of *On Style*), Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Quintilian, we come up with a rather instructive failure. The rhetorical texts typically prize clarity as the highest value of poetic language. It is perhaps no surprise then that they find little use for *ainigmata* in poems. It is even possible to locate an explicit break from the poetics of the riddle right at the origin point of rhetorical criticism.

In a move whose significance has hardly been noticed, Aristotle actually defines his new central category for figurative language, “metaphor” (which will become his master-trope) over and against enigma, which we know from the Derveni text to be already fully implicated in allegorical reading. In the *Poetics* Aristotle defines metaphor in explicit contrast to the, in his view, negative example of enigma. This discussion comes up in his consideration of style, which he claims needs to strike a balance—it must be clear but not plain. [λέξεως δὲ ἀρετὴ σαφὴ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴν εἶναι] The clearest style uses only common language, but such a style is plain. One that uses unfamiliar words, mainly foreign words and metaphors, is dignified [σεμνή] but it also can go too far. When one overuses foreign words, one produces non-Greek babble. Overuse of metaphor produces an enigma. [ἀλλ’ ἄν τις ἅπαντα τοιαῦτα ποιήσῃ, ἢ αἴνιγμα ἔσται ἢ βαρβαρισμός· ἂν μὲν οὖν ἐκ μεταφορῶν, αἴνιγμα, ἐὰν δὲ ἐκ γλωττῶν, βαρβαρισμός.] So Aristotle here, at the head of rhetorical criticism, revalues the defining characteristic of great poetry, according to allegorical readers, as a flaw of style. He supercedes the allegorists’ master trope with

his own category of more moderate sense-shifting, the metaphor. He repeats the point in the *Rhetoric* (1405b) “Metaphors,” he says there, “are enigmas, such that it is clear that the transference has been made well.” [μεταφοραὶ γὰρ αἰνίττονται, ὥστε δῆλον ὅτι εὖ μετενήνεκται.] In the context of this duel between anchoring concepts, we should also note that the notion of metaphor is likely to have come from the rhetorical tradition—it is already in evidence in Isocrates (9.9). There seems little doubt that when Aristotle situates metaphor at the center of his poetics, and defines it over and against a now negatively valued enigma, he is engaging in a polemic against contemporary allegoresis—this is a pivotal move in his poetics, and it gives him the fulcrum to shift the field away from the question of interpretation—or *what* a poem means—and toward analysis—or *how* a poem produces meaning. Nearly all rhetorical critics that follow Aristotle repeat his understanding of enigma as an obscure component within a general scheme of tropes, with a coda that good poets avoid it since it tends to produce an unclear style.

This context helps clarify a distinctive difference between allegorical views of poetry and the views one sees expressed in Aristotle and his followers. The notion that truly meaningful language is precisely that which is *not* clear could not be farther from a rhetorical scheme of values. In fact, the Derveni commentary, read as a context for the *Poetics*, makes clear that the rhetorical value of clear language was held up precisely in contrast to the idea that murky enigmas in poetic language carried great and powerful messages. Where then did this notion, which provoked Aristotle to forwarding such a formative counter-position, come from?

Ainik Terms in The Classical Period

A survey of uses of αἴνιγμα in the classical period yields an interesting conceptual mapping. The first point of note is that these terms are actually quite rare. If we focus on the extant classical corpus, as approximated by the 142 Greek texts in the Perseus database, the verb αἰνίττομαι appears slightly more than once per 100,000 words (1.1 / 100,000). Over the same sample σημαίνω appears 18.2 times per 100,000 words, and a very common verb like λαμβάνω appears 155 times as often (170 / 100,000). The noun αἴνιγμα appears with an equal frequency to the verb. The various adverb and adjective forms

appear only a few times in the corpus (collectively about a third as often as either the verb or the noun.)

Considering all appearances of the term in the classical texts in this sample, about a third of them have to do with oblique language in general. Nearly half of these appear in the context of tragedy, where a character, usually a messenger, speaks obliquely to deliver a message that is hard to bear. The interlocutor complains that the person is speaking in riddles, and asks the person to clarify. But three distinct specific meanings come into view. A large cluster of enigma terms in the classical period refers to riddles, which are posed as intellectual challenges put to a protagonist who must produce a solution, traditionally on pain of death. The famous riddle of the Sphinx accounts for the majority of these—and nearly all references to it come from two texts—the *OT* and the *Phoenician Women*.¹⁷ A second specialized use in the surviving corpus confirms what we have already seen in allegorical commentators. The wider parlance confirms what the allegorical evidence itself tell us—that αἰνιγμα terms are distinctively marked as terms of art in allegorical reading.¹⁸

Aristophanes' self-mocking at the beginning of *Peace* shows this. Here two servants wonder what deep meanings the whiz kids of their day will find in the disgusting dung beetle that they are forced to attend to.

Second Servant

....What an indecent, stinking, gluttonous beast! I don't know what angry god let this monster loose upon us, but of a certainty it was neither Aphrodite nor the Graces.

First Servant

Who was it then?

¹⁷ See, e.g., Euripides, *The Phoenician Women* 48, 1049, 1353, 1688, 1731, 1759.

¹⁸ The distribution results of the frequency search look like this (for a fuller discussion of the results, see Struck, 171-73):

	general	riddle	prophecy	poetry
αἰνιγμός	4	1	1	
αἰνιγματώδης, -ες;	3		1	1
αἰνικτηρίως			2	
αἰνικτός, -ή, -όν			1	
αἶνιγμα	8	9	6	3
αἰνίττομαι	6	3	7	10
Total	21	13	18	14
Percentage	32%	20%	27%	21%

Second Servant

No doubt Zeus, the God of the Thundercrap.

First Servant

But perhaps now some spectator, some beardless youth, who thinks himself a sage, will say, What is this? What does the beetle mean? And then an Ionian, sitting next him, will add, *I think it refers enigmatically to Cleon*, who so shamelessly feeds on filth all by himself. —

Οικέτης Β

.... μιαρὸν τὸ χρῆμα καὶ κάκοσμον καὶ βορόν·
χῶτου ποτὶ ἐστὶ δαιμόνων ἢ προσβολή
οὐκ οἶδῶ. Ἀφροδίτης μὲν γάρ οὐ μοι φαίνεται,
οὐ μὲν Χαρίτων γε.

Οικέτης Α

τοῦ γάρ ἐστῶ;

Οικέτης Β

οὐκ ἔσθῶ ὥπως
τοῦτῶ ἐστι τὸ τέρας οὐ Διὸς Σκαταιβάτου.

Οικέτης Α

οὐκοῦν ἂν ἤδη τῶν θεατῶν τις λέγοι
νεανίας δοκησίσοφος, “τὸ δὲ πρᾶγμα τί;
ὁ κάκθαρος δὲ πρὸς τί;” κᾶτ’ αὐτῷ γ’ ἀνὴρ
Ἰωνικός τίς φησι παρακαθήμενος·
“δοκέω μὲν, ἐς Κλέωνα τοῦτ’ αἰνίσσεται
ὥς κείνος ἀναιδέως τὴν σπατίλῃν ἐσθίει.”

Our two hapless men of the street poke their finger in the eye of the high-flown intellectual interpreters of their day. The precise joke is on people who over-interpret things. Given the Derveni commentator’s evidence that “enigma” terms have a specialized use in allegorical criticism, combined with the allegorists’ reputation for finding too many meanings in seemingly innocent things, it is precisely these kinds of readers who are being sent up here.

At the famous passage in the *Republic* where Plato leaves open the question of whether the traditional myths have allegorical undermeanings or not, he uses *huponoia*. However, he more typically refers to this kind of reading using cognates of αἴνιγμα. A well-known reading of the heart/wax nexus from the *Theaetetus* uses this language. Plato explores the theory that the soul receives impressions, like wax. In this context he makes a casual reference to Homer’s language for heart [κῆρ], and points out the similarity between the Homeric term and the word for wax [κηρός]. In the *Republic* Plato gives a mock grandeur to the ideas of the poet Simonides, which turn out to have problems when read literally. Simonides had suggested that the just is “to render to each his due.” Socrates says that it is not easy to

disbelieve this poet, who is a wise and divine man [σοφὸς καὶ θεῖος ἀνὴρ], but there are problems in this definition. What if a person does technically owe something to someone but returning it will cause that person harm—that can't be just, can it? No, Socrates. “As it turns out, Simonides was speaking enigmatically, in a poetic manner, about what the just is.” [ἡνίξατο ἄρα, ἦν δὲ ἐγώ, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὁ Σιμωνίδης ποιητικῶς τὸ δίκαιον ὃ εἶη. (*Rep.* 332b - 332c)] What he meant was that justice is rendering to each what befits him [τὸ προσήκον], the name that he gave to this was the due [τοῦτο δὲ νόμασεν ὀφειλόμενον] Here αἰνίττομαι marks a sense shifting, where one word is said to refer to another in an oblique fashion. The Derveni text uses the term in precisely this way. The *Republic* text carries a further suggestion that during Plato's time speaking enigmatically is closely linked with speaking poetically. Given the word order, the verb and the adverb have an almost appositional character in the sentence. A passage from the spurious *Second Alcibiades* supports this reading. The Socrates of this dialogue characterizes poetry in general to be the production of riddles.

Well, this man [the poet of the *Margites*] is speaking enigmatically, my good fellow, he and nearly all the other poets too. For all of poetry is by nature riddling and it is not for just any man to understand it. [ἀλλ' αἰνίττεται, ὦ βέλτιστε, καὶ οὗτος καὶ ἄλλοι δὲ ποιηταὶ σχεδόν τι πάντες. ἔστιν τε γὰρ φύσει ποιητικὴ ἢ σύμπασα αἰνιγματώδης καὶ οὐ τοῦ προστυχόντος ἀνδρὸς γνωρίσαι. (*Second Alcibiades* 147b)]

As he goes on in his interpretation of the passage at hand, Socrates says that the poet has enigmatically given an adverb form which hints at an intended noun form and an infinitive form which hints at a finite form. These shifts in sense make the poet's sentiment more friendly to the argument he is making at the moment.¹⁹ Again, like the *Ion* reference with which we began, we needn't suggest that these

¹⁹ This introduces a reading of the passage in which it is said of Margites: “Full many crafts he knew: but still he knew them all so very poorly” [ὥς ἄρα πολλὰ μὲν ἡπίστατο ἔργα, κακῶς δέ, φησὶν, ἡπίστατο πάντα]. Which Socrates reads this way:

But it is a riddle, I think, in which he has made “ill” stand for “evil,” and “knew” for “to know.” [τὸ κακῶς μὲν ἀντὶ τοῦ κακοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἡπίστατο ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐπίστασθαι.] So if we put it together, letting the meter go, indeed, but grasping his meaning, we get this: “Full many crafts he knew, but it was evil for him to know them all.” [ὥς πολλὰ μὲν ἡπίστατο ἔργα, κακὸν δ' ἦν ἐπίστασθαι αὐτῷ πάντα ταῦτα.]

dialogues sincerely endorse such a view of the poet; surely they are mocking and satirizing it. But these satires give us valuable information on the current of ideas at the time, no less than the Aristophanes text that wonders aloud what the critic's ingenuity will make out of the dung beetle. In all these texts, the critical language and view of the poets which is being satirized with enigma references is a distinctly allegorical one.

Enigma Terms in Oracle Language

Lastly, the surviving classical corpus also clearly attests to another specialized use for this cluster of terms. Αἰνίγματα appear with high frequency in the context of oracles.²⁰ This use is attested just as strongly as the idea of the riddle, the interpretive game embodied in the Sphinx's challenge. Furthermore, the oracular use is quite a bit more broadly attested. As I mentioned, the use of αἰνίγματα terms in reference to riddles is concentrated on two texts, the *OT* and the *Phoenician Women*, which account for over half of the extant uses of the term in this context (8/13). If we discount the αἰνίγματα as riddle slightly, due to this concentration of references, there is no question that the oracular context dominates the classical uses of the term. Enigmas seem most frequently to come from the mouths of oracles.

Pindar uses the term to describe the cryptic prophecies of the seer Amphiaraus.²¹ Herodotus suggests that a dream speaks in riddles.²² Interestingly, this particular dream speaks a hexametric couplet to the dreamer, and these hexameters are said to speak enigmatically to the sleeper. Aristophanes at *Knights* 196 tells us that an oracle speaks enigmatically. Euripides, at *Ion* 533 and *Suppliants* 138, says that oracles speak in enigmas. In Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1112 and 1183 the prophetic pronouncements of Cassandra are called enigmas. (Fraenkel's edition ad loc. [Oxford, 1950] expands on the "enigma" as a mantic utterance). In the *Timaeus* 72b Plato tells us that it is the job of the interpreter of oracles to solve their enigmas. In the *Apology* Socrates speaks of the Delphic Oracle that declared him the wisest of men, and

²⁰ For more on the connection between enigma language and oracles, see Pietro Pucci, *Enigma segreto oracolo* (Pisa-Roma 1996).

²¹ *Pythian Ode* 8.40

²² *Histories* 5.56

he consistently says that the oracle must have spoken in an αἴνιγμα (21b, 27a, 27d). Two additional texts from Plato put a rather fine point on this information. Plato reveals that a prophetic style is by definition an enigmatic style. Speaking of the person, whoever it is, who set the famous inscription “know thyself” at Delphi, Critias claims he has formed an enigma that really means “Be temperate” [Σωφρόνει]:

...but he speaks in a rather riddling fashion, like a prophet; for “Know thyself” and “Be temperate” are the same, as the inscription and I declare, though one is likely enough to think them different. [αἰνιγματωδέστερον δὲ δὴ, ὥς μάντις, λέγει· τὸ γὰρ “γνῶθι σαυτόν” καὶ τὸ “Σωφρόνει” ἔστιν μὲν ταυτόν, ὡς τὰ γράμματα φησιν καὶ ἐγώ, τάχα δ’ ἂν τις οἰηθείη ἄλλο εἶναι, (*Charmides* 164e–165a)]

This kind of substitutional reading is precisely how Plato satirized allegorical enigmas in the evidence we just saw.

Leaving no doubt on the special use of enigma in divination language, *Symposium* 192d places the verbs αἰνίττεται and μαντεύεται in apposition:

But the soul of each one clearly desires something else, which it is unable to express, but it expresses it in oracular fashion, and enigmatically.
ἀλλ’ ἄλλο τι βουλομένη ἐκατέρου ἢ ψυχὴ δῆλη ἐστίν, ὃ οὐ δύναται εἰπεῖν, ἀλλὰ μαντεύεται ὃ βούλεται, καὶ αἰνίττεται.

Taken together, these last two texts also provide a parallel to the *Second Alcibiades* text. The verb αἰνίττεται elides with equal ease into a definition of the language of the poet and the language of the mantis. One can just as easily αἰνίττεται ποιητικῶς as one can αἰνίττεται ὡς μάντις.

But a final reference from Aristophanes is as relevant as it is funny and might serve as a suitable closing thought on this portion of the evidence. Around line 900 of the *Birds*, an oracle monger appears to Pisthetaerus as one among the long string of interlopers who intrude on the founding of Cloudcuckooland (959 ff):

An Oracle-Monger enters.

Oracle-Monger

Let not the goat be sacrificed.

Pisthetaerus

Who are you?

Oracle-Monger

Who am I? An Oracle-Monger.

Pisthetaerus

Get out!

Oracle-Monger

Wretched man, insult not sacred things. For there is an oracle of Bacis, which exactly applies to Cloudcookooland.

Pisthetaerus

Why did you not reveal it to me before I founded my city?

Oracle-Monger

The divine spirit was against it.

Pisthetaerus

Well, I suppose there's nothing to do but hear the terms of the oracle.

Oracle-Monger

But when the wolves and the white crows shall dwell together between Corinth and Sicyon

Pisthetaerus

What do the Corinthians have to do with me?

Oracle-Monger

Bacis enigmatized this to the *aër*.

They must first sacrifice a white-fleeced goat to Pandora, and give the prophet who first reveals my words a good cloak and new sandals.

Pisthetaerus

Does it say sandals there?

Oracle-Monger

Look at the book.

And besides this a goblet of wine and a good share of the entrails of the victim.

Pisthetaerus

Of the entrails —does it say that?

Oracle-Monger

Look at the book.

If you do as I command, divine youth, you shall be an eagle among the clouds;

if not, you shall be neither turtle-dove, nor eagle, nor woodpecker.

Pisthetaerus

Does it say all that?

Oracle-Monger

Look at the book.

Pisthetaerus

This oracle in no sort of way resembles the one Apollo dictated to me:

If an impostor comes without invitation to annoy you during the sacrifice and to demand a share of the victim, apply a stout stick to his ribs.

Oracle-Monger

You are drivelling.

Pisthetaerus

Look at the book.

And don't spare him, were he an eagle from out of the clouds, were it Lampon himself or the great Diopithes.

Oracle-Monger

Does it say that?

Pisthetaerus

Look at the book and go and hang yourself.

In inelegant hexameters, Aristophanes lampoons the professionals as being accustomed to finding oblique references in oracles that they can twist in whatever way is necessary to make an oracle fit a given situation. Corinth is made to mean the *aēr* and so the oracle can be interpreted to apply to the new city in the clouds. The term that sets off this parody is precisely the verb αἰνίτεται that I have been mapping here. The oracle text “enigmatizes” and so produces meanings other than those which appear on the surface. This is parallel to the reference from the *Peace* of Aristophanes which we saw a moment ago in the context of literary allegory. Even down to the syntax, the verb αἰνίτεται does the same service.

Birds

What do the Corinthians have to do with me?

Bacis enigmatized this to the *aēr*.

τί οὖν προσήκει δῆτ' ἐμοὶ Κορινθίων;
ἡνίξαθ' ὁ Βάκις τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα

Peace

The dung beetle, refers to what? and then some

Ionian man sitting next to him says:

I think he enigmatizes this to Cleon.

ὁ κᾶνθαρος δὲ πρὸς τί; κᾶτ' αὐτῷ γ' ἀνὴρ
Ἴωνικός τις φησι παρακαθήμενος·
δοκέω μὲν, ἐς Κλέωνα τοῦτ' αἰνίσσεται

While the second text leaves unclear whether the verb is transitive or intransitive, the first argues that it is transitive with an unexpressed subject. Both verbs operate by predicating things with directional prepositions [πρὸς or ἐς] to other things. Aristophanes satirizes both situations, where surplus meanings are dug out by professionals, in precisely the same way. The interpretive situations are functionally identical, and knife edge of his wit, in both these contexts, makes precisely the same cut. The satirical edge should also rule out the

possibility that what we have here is simple coincidence. Had he chosen the term casually, in either context, it simply wouldn't have been as funny. Instead, we can be confident that he is mocking the professionals in their own terms. Were the comparison explicit, one might suggest Aristophanes himself was drawing it in order to reflect poorly on either the diviner or the allegorist, but it isn't at all explicit. These are two moments of satire, separated by seven years (*Peace* 421, *Birds* 414), which happen to use the same language.

Conclusions

This mapping of the notion of the *ainigma*, shows a noteworthy affiliation between allegorical reading and the reading of oracles. Not only are these two fields of ancient thinking related in their general approach to their texts. But further, the professionals in these fields share specific views of their respective texts. The Derveni commentator leaves no doubt that enigma ideas are in the classical period part of the allegorists' technical apparatus. This evidence is confirmed by testimonia on allegorism in Aristophanes, Plato, and especially in the *Second Alcibiades*. The breadth of attestation of αἴνιγμα terms in an oracular context points to their specialized use in the reading of oracles. Both the diviner and the allegorical critic see their texts specifically as "enigmas," which carry hidden meanings to the skilled interpreter.

That the term has so few specialized uses is significant. If we ask who properly spoke in enigmas in the ancient world, we arrive at a very short list: poets, prophets, and the Sphinx. I have tracked these ideas only in the form of a chart that shows affiliation and not a stemma that would show dependence. Given the length and breadth of attestation of divination in the Mediterranean generally, I find it difficult to believe that prophets were not the dominant force at work here, and that readers of poetry formed their ideas in analogy to them. It is also possible, though, that the riddle, a potentially deadly intellectual challenge, is the foundation of the concept, and that the oracle-reading and poetry-reading were both modeled on it. In addition, we should note that the philological evidence argues that the complex of enigma terms grew out of a poetic context.²³ However, the breadth

²³ See Struck, 179.

of attestation of the prophetic uses is much higher, and attests that this soon becomes the main stream of the idea, with the other ideas becoming tributaries.

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CHRESMOLOGUES AND *MANTEIS*: INDEPENDENT DIVINERS AND THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY

JOHN DILLERY

Toward the beginning of Book 7 of his *History*, in the narrative of the events leading up to Xerxes' decision to invade Greece, Herodotus recounts an important episode. In addition to his hot-headed cousin Mardonius, there were a number of non-Persian hangers-on at the court of Xerxes who were pushing for invasion: messengers from the Aleuadae of Thessaly, the Pisistratids, and a man the Pisistratids had brought with them, "Onomacritus, an Athenian man, a *chrēsmologos* and an arranger (*diathetēs*) of the oracles of Musaeus, having made up their quarrel with him." The detail about an earlier quarrel between Onomacritus and the sons of Pisistratus prompts Herodotus to digress:

For Onomacritus was driven out of Athens by Hipparchus the son of Pisistratus, having been caught by Lasus of Hermione in the act of introducing into the work of Musaeus an oracle that the islands lying off Lemnos would disappear under the sea (7.6.3).

Herodotus tells us that Hipparchus took this action in spite of the fact that earlier Onomacritus had been a close associate. But later, having come to Susa with the Pisistratids, whenever he came into the king's presence, his patrons would make solemn testimonials about him, and he would recite a selection from his oracles: if there were prophecies portending disaster for Xerxes, these he left out, uttering instead the ones that seemed to promise success.

I will examine this passage in detail later, but there are two problems I want to take up here that will help define issues that will form the subject of this paper. First, the relationship between Onomacritus and the Pisistratids is remarkable for the many turns it seems to take: he is first in favor with them, then, despite his closeness, is exiled by Hipparchus, only to be brought back into the Pisistratid orbit again later while the tyrants are resident in Persia. Whatever the reason the Pisistratids drove the chresmologue out of Athens was clearly not in effect later in Susa, but we have to assume that there was a serious breach between Onomacritus and the tyrants in order to have a reconciliation later. But it may also be that the Pisistratids would not

have exiled Onomacritus if they did not have to, implying that external agency—popular dissatisfaction?²—with the oracle-monger forced their hand. This in turn suggests another possibility, namely that the discovery of Onomacritus' fraud was a public one, in a setting that the Pisistratids could not control. In any case, the revelation by Lasus of Onomacritus' interpolation seems to require some sort of performance of the oracle in question, for how else could the chresmologue be caught "red-handed"?

Clearly the relationship between Onomacritus and the Pisistratids was complex. But however we try to reconstruct it, the episode of his exposure suggests that his authority was tied to his patrons. One axis of inquiry that this paper will follow will be precisely the issue of how the independent diviner—be he chresmologue, *mantis*, or some other figure—stood in relation to the community he served, or, to put it another way, how his authority was defined. Another axis will concern a related topic: how do the activities of the independent diviner relate to the problem of oral and written culture. Although the crime of Onomacritus is often referred to by moderns as "forgery", in fact Lasus of Hermione is spoken of as catching him "in the act" of interpolating an oracle, that is, a context where the prophecies of Musaeus were being recited. The issue of the authority of the independent religious expert is deeply implicated in the broader one of early Greek notions regarding the probative power of the written word.

These two axes, the authority of the diviner and his relation to the oral vs. literate divide, will be charted here against a review of the *chrēsmologos* and *mantis* over time. It so happens that the Onomacritus episode in Herodotus presents in brief the main periods for the independent diviner: the world of myth/legend (Musaeus), the archaic period (Onomacritus), and the classical period (Herodotus' reception of the story). I will follow these rough divisions in my discussion. I do not aim at a comprehensive presentation of *manteis* and chresmologues. Rather, what I do here is trace the main developments in the function of independent divination by looking at important, representative figures. But first, a word on terminology.

I. *Mantis*, *Chrēsmologos*, *Prophētēs*. *Dependent and Independent Divination*

Difficulties attend the interpretation of both agent nouns in Greek with which we are here concerned—*mantis* and *chrēsmologos*. Despite

the protests of Rohde and Wilamowitz,¹ *mantis* seems to be related to the verb μάνινομαι and the noun μανία, all from the IE root *men-, thus linking the concept of “seer” or “diviner” with “madness”.² These earlier scholars objected that this derivation of the word laid too much stress on the ecstatic element of prophecy, and that the term was instead to be connected to μηνύω and the notion of revelation.³ However, the link between *mantis* and divine inspiration or madness is one that the Greeks themselves recognized (e.g. Plato, *Phdr.* 244c; cf. *Euthyphr.* 3c), and should not be seriously questioned.⁴ The central function of the *mantis* was to interpret the divine will through omens (most often of birds) and sacrifice. Curiously, the term could even rarely be applied to the gods themselves. In the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*, Apollo refers to *manteia* as something that is the exclusive possession first of Zeus and then, he implies, himself (*h.Merc.* 533-38). Archilochus speaks of Zeus as the “most reliable (ἀψεudέστατος) *mantis* among the gods” (F 298 West²). Plato refers to Apollo as a *mantis* as well (*Lg.* 686a), and Pausanias records that at Amphiclea the people refer to the same deity as their *mantis* (10.33.1). Indeed, the very term used in connection with the Pythian priestess at Delphi, πρόμαντις (e.g. Hdt. 6.66.2-3, 7.141.2), implies that Apollo was thought of as the *mantis* there as well.⁵ As for *chrēsmologos*, the difficulty lies not in the etymology but in the force of the -*logos* element. Although the idea of a “compiler” and hence “purveyor” of oracles (χρησμοί) is regularly emphasized,⁶ because of the ambiguity of the -*logos* suffix, the word

¹ E. Rohde, *Psyche*, W. Willis, trans., 8th ed. (New York 1925), 311 n.41; U. v. Wilamowitz, *Glaube der Hellenen* (Berlin 1931), vol. I, 40 n.2.

² See, e.g., P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque* (Paris 1984), vol. II, 665 s.v.; W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, J. Raffan, trans. (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 112. Also P. Roth, *Mantis: the Nature, Function, and Status of a Greek Prophetic Type* (Diss. Bryn Mawr 1982), 9-18 with notes.

³ Revived by M. Casevitz, “*Mantis*: le vrai sens,” *REG* 105 (1992): 1-18; J.N. Bremmer, “The Status and Symbolic Capital of the Seer,” in R. Hägg, ed., *The Role of Religion in the Early Greek Polis* (Stockholm 1996), 98.

⁴ Chantraine, *Dictionnaire* (n.2), vol. II, 665, does note that there is no parallel in Greek for masculine agent nouns that end in -tis (μάρπτis “seizer” is an emendation at Aes. *Supp.* 826 of μάρπις).

⁵ E. Fascher, *Προφήτης* (Giessen 1927), 32-33; S. Georgoudi, “Les Porte-Parole des Dieux: Réflexions sur le Personnel des Oracles Grecs,” in Chirassi Colombo and T. Seppilli, eds., *Sibille e Linguaggi Oracolari. Mito, Storia, Tradizione*, I (Pisa and Rome 1998), 331-5. Cf. LSJ s.v. πρόμαντις.

⁶ E.g. J.H. Oliver, *The Athenian Expounders of the Sacred and Ancestral Law* (Baltimore 1950), 6-10; Chantraine (n.2), vol. II, 1276 s.v. χρησ-. Cf. D. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), 95.

can also mean one who “utters” oracles, and in fact some scholars stress this meaning.⁷ In a passage that is important in a number of ways, though late, Pausanias clearly understands *chrêsmologos* as a predicate that denotes one who “speaks” oracles. Commenting on a forged set of oracles attributed to Amphiaraus, he writes: “apart from the ones they say were made mad by Apollo long ago, no one of the *manteis* was a speaker of oracles (*chrêsmologos*); rather, they were expert at explaining dreams and interpreting the flights of birds and the innards of sacrificial victims” (Paus. 1.34.4). For Pausanias it is actually the divinely inspired *chrêsmologos* who utters oracles, whereas the *mantis*, unless one of those from long ago (τὸ ἀρχαῖον), is an expert in interpretation. While it looks as though Pausanias is separating the *mantis* from madness, on closer inspection it is clear that he is arguing against a prevailing view, and indeed must concede that heroic *manteis* were “maddened” by Apollo.

This passage raises another problem that concerns both *mantis* and *chrêsmologos*: the two terms can to some extent overlap, with *chrêsmologos* taking on some of the force of *mantis* in the meaning “soothsayer” and hence “seer”.⁸ In rare cases the two words can even be used to describe the same man: thus, in the scholia to Aristophanes *Birds* 521, the Athenian Lampon is called both a *mantis* and a *chrêsmologos* (see below), and relatedly, in a fragment of Sophocles, the famous *mantis* of legend Musaeus may have been identified as a *chrêsmologos* (*TrGF* IV F 1116), though this text is problematic. But it needs to be said that the two terms were normally thought of as separate. Thucydides clearly believes that, while the words denote figures whose divinatory abilities are allied, they are not synonymous (Thuc. 8.1.1); Aristophanes shares this view in yet another description of an important Athenian religious expert, Hierocles (*Peace* 1046-7).⁹

Greek also has other words that denote persons who seem to be roughly identical either with *chrêsmologos* or *mantis*. Oliver argued some time ago that the “expounder” of sacred matters (ἐξηγητής) at Athens was similar in function to the *chrêsmologos*, and was roundly criticized

⁷ E.g. M.P. Nilsson, rev. Oliver (n.6), *AJP* 71 (1950): 421-2; R. Garland, “Religious Authority in Archaic and Classical Athens,” *ABSA* 79 (1984): 113; S.D. Olson, *Aristophanes Peace* (Oxford 1998), 269.

⁸ Cf. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors* (n.6), 11.

⁹ A.W. Argyle, “Χρησμολόγοι and Μάντεις,” *CR* 20 (1970): 139.

for doing so.¹⁰ In fact an exegete at Athens was responsible for the interpretation of sacred law (see esp. Plato *Euthyphr.* 4c, Isaeus 8.39).¹¹ By the later fourth century, however, it seems pretty clear that little separated the *exēgētai* from other religious experts (e.g. Theophrastus *Char.* 16.6). As for terms allied to *mantis*, Plato often employs the adjective *χρησμοδός* substantively, and twice with the rare term *θεομάντις*, to indicate a prophetic soothsayer whose divine inspiration is akin to the poets (note esp. *Ion* 534c, *Ap.* 22c, *Meno* 99c). In Homer the adjective *θεοπρόπος* is likewise used substantively as a synonym for *mantis* (e.g. *Il.* 12.228, *Od.* 1.415), whereas elsewhere it can mean a messenger sent out by a city to obtain an oracle (cf. *Hdt.* 7.140.1), and is thus also akin to *θεωρός*. Another relevant term is *προφήτης*. Although this noun can overlap considerably with *mantis*, the main difference between the two is that the *prophētēs* is usually attached to a specific god at a particular cult site, with responsibility for communicating the divine will.¹² In this sense we can speak of the *prophētēs* as a “dependent” diviner, whereas the *mantis* was not usually connected to a specific cult, and was thus “independent”. But we should not expect exactitude in this distinction either. Thus, for instance, in his hymn to Apollo Ptoius, Pindar mentions a *naopolos mantis* (F 51d Maehler), a figure that obviously must be connected in some official way to the temple (*naos*).¹³ I will treat *manteis* and chresmologues as distinct, and the two as different from other comparable figures with more obvious ties to particular cult, but the boundaries are no doubt not as firm as I have drawn them.¹⁴ In general what distinguished the independent diviner from other religious figures, of civic cult and major sanctuaries, was that in the main their competence had more to do with expertise

¹⁰ Oliver, *Athenian Expounders* (n.6), ch.1, with Nilsson’s review (n.7), also K. Hanell, *Gnomon* 25 (1953): 522-27. Cf. Garland, “Religious Authority” (n.7), 114-5. Note *IG I³* 131 and 137 (mid and late 5th): Apollo Pythius as ancestral *exēgētēs* of Athens, with Plato *Resp.* 427c, and *Ath. Mitt.* 1941, 184 lines 8-9 (c.200). Cf. H.B. Mattingly, “Athens, Delphi and Eleusis in the late 420s,” in *The Athenian Empire Restored. Epigraphic and Historical Studies* (Ann Arbor 1996), 184-5 = *PACA* 9 (1966): 63-64.

¹¹ J. Mikalson, *Athenian Popular Religion* (Chapel Hill 1983), 40-41.

¹² Fascher, *Προφήτης* (n.5), 32-40. There are cases where *prophētēs* seems to mean an independent diviner, e.g. Aeschylus *Ag.* 409 (see below).

¹³ Georgoudi, “Personnel des Oracles Grecs” (n.5), 329-30.

¹⁴ Cf. M.-L. Haack, “Haruspices publics et privés: Tentative d’une distinction,” *REA* 104 (2002): 111-33.

and skill and less with inspiration, though the seers of myth prove an exception to this rule.¹⁵

II. *The Independent Diviner in Myth and Legend*

Agamemnon rebukes Calchas at the beginning of the *Iliad*: “*mantis* of evil, never yet have you spoken to me anything good; | always it is pleasing to your heart to prophesy evils, | and you never utter a good word nor have you accomplished one” (1.106-8). It is telling that the first description of an independent diviner we have in Greek literature is a negative one. And note, too, that Agamemnon’s words imply that Calchas was regularly consulted by the army up to that point, so that his function as *mantis* is imagined as anterior to the action of the poem. Indeed later writers such as Aeschylus seem almost certain to have understood Agamemnon’s remarks to apply to the earlier sacrifice at Aulis of Iphigenia, an event mandated in a prophecy delivered by Calchas, even though the ancient scholia on this line of the *Iliad* may reject the connection.¹⁶ One of the recurring features of *manteis* in myth is their opposition to the authority of kings. Teiresias is perhaps most familiar in this regard, especially as we see him in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*.¹⁷ In Homer the opposition of the seer/prophet to the chieftain can even be seen within the circle of the leader’s close associates. The warrior-seer Polydamas in the *Iliad* is described as Hector’s close companion (ἑταῖρος), born on the same night as the Trojan captain (18.251); yet twice he finds himself having to steer Hector on a safer course (12.61-79, 13.726-47), and on two other occasions is violently rebuked by him for urging a more cautious plan of action (12.230-50, 18.285-309).¹⁸ Although he is

¹⁵ A.D. Nock, “Religious Attitudes of the Ancient Greeks,” in Z. Stewart, ed., *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Oxford 1972), vol. II, 539.

¹⁶ The bT scholia: τὸ γὰρ Ἰφιγενείας ὄνομα οὐδὲ οἶδεν ὁ ποιητής, an observation due to the Alexandrian stricture to “explain Homer from Homer” (R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* [Oxford 1968], 227). On *Iliad* 1.106 and *Ag.* 186, E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950), vol. II, 115 n.2.

¹⁷ S.C. Humphreys, *Anthropology and the Greeks* (London 1978), 255; cf. G.E.R. Lloyd, *The Ambitions of Curiosity. Understanding the World in Ancient Greece and China* (Cambridge 2002), 36.

¹⁸ The uniformity of Polydamas’ speeches has occasioned analyst speculation: D. Lohmann, *Die Komposition der Reden in der Ilias* (Berlin 1970), 178-82; and B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary* (Cambridge 1993), vol. III, 325 ad *Il.* 12.61-79.

nowhere actually called a *mantis*, in his speech in Book 13, Polydamas claims that being an adviser “in whom Zeus has placed a far-seeing mind” (732) is opposed to the one whom the divine has made a fighter (730), as well as other forms of expertise (dancer, bard 731); and in Hector’s famous rejection of Polydamas’ interpretation of “bird-signs,” seer-craft is rejected *tout court*, in words reminiscent of Agamemnon’s reply to Calchas in Book 1 (12.231-50). The *mantis* and the chieftain are ultimately oppositional forces; while Polydamas is Hector’s “alter ego,” he is also the paired opposite of the great Trojan leader.¹⁹

The most detailed picture of the *mantis* we have in Homer is of Theoclymenus from Book 15 of the *Odyssey* (223-81). He, too, is at odds with powerful figures: he has slain a kinsman who has many brothers and relatives who hold great power among the Achaeans (272-4); and of course later in the epic he relates his gruesome vision of the suitors just before their slaughter, and thereby earns their ill-timed ridicule, Eurymachus’ in particular (20.351-70). But the bulk of the digression in *Od.* 15 given to Theoclymenus concerns his family—a family, it turns out, composed almost entirely of seers: his lineage begins with Melampus (225), who in turn fathered Antiphates and Mantius (242) (the latter, though not identified as such, in all likelihood a seer given his name); Antiphates’ grandson is none other than the renowned *mantis* of the Seven against Thebes, Amphiaraus (244), while Mantius’ own son Polyphides is made by Apollo “the best seer by far among men, after the death of Amphiaraus.” (252-3) Theoclymenus is the son of this Polyphides (256). Just as important as this succession of *manteis* are the sad tales attached to almost all of them: it is worth noting in particular that Melampus suffers terrible treatment at the hands of the hero Neleus, that Amphiaraus is betrayed by his wife Eriphyle, and that Polyphides is driven into exile by his own father because of a feud. And we are entitled to add to the genealogy the sons of Amphiaraus, namely Alcmaeon and Amphilochus, both Epigoni of the Theban cycle of myth. While clearly mentioned (248), they are not identified as seers in the lineage of Theoclymenus, but we know from (admittedly) late accounts that Alcmaeon was married to Manto (note the name), a daughter of Teiresias, and that Amphilochus was a companion of Calchas, and was later divinized and made an oracular

¹⁹ Cf. J.M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: the Tragedy of Hector* (Chicago 1975), 143.

source at Mallus in Cilicia,²⁰ reputed to be second to none in accuracy (Paus. 1.34.3: *μαντεῖον ἀψευδέστατον*—note Zeus above). Pausanias adds an alternative genealogy that makes Clytius, the founder of the Clytidae (see below), of this lineage as well, the son of Alcmaeon and grandson of Amphiaraus. We are told that he migrated to Elis because of anger at his maternal uncles for killing his father (Paus. 6.17.6).

Even more than the figure of Polydamas, Theoclymenus' presence in the *Odyssey* has excited a great deal of analytic skepticism.²¹ Setting aside the question of its compositional relationship to the whole of the *epos*, Erbse's defense of it is worth noting here. The massive genealogical digression is meant to convince the audience that Theoclymenus is a master seer who has inherited his ability from his family, and hence we can be sure of his predictions towards the end of the poem.²² This is surely the point of the vignette, and whether an authentic part of the *Odyssey* or not, it presupposes that being a seer is something that runs in families and is something furthermore that often pits the possessor of mantic ability against powerful figures. The genealogy of Hagesias, son of Sostratus (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 2),²³ the honorand of Pindar's *Olympian* 6, also suggests that independent divination ran in families, for he was of the prophetic Iamidae, "the sons of Iamus," that boasted several seers. There were in fact at least three families that could claim many generations of diviners: the Clytidae, Telliaidae, and the Iamidae (cf. Philostr. *VA* 5.25, Cicero, *de Div.* 1.91). An inscription survives from Olympia which records *manteis* from both the Clytidae and Iamidae consecutively from Olympiads 186 (39 BC) to 261 (AD 265).²⁴

²⁰ Apollodorus 3.6.2, 3.7.7, 3.10.8. "Amphilochus" is the name both of the brother and the son of Alcmaeon, and the two were often conflated.

²¹ See A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford 1989), vol. II, 245-6 ad *Od.* 15.223-81. Cf. Polydamas, n.18.

²² H. Erbse, *Beiträge zum Verständnis der Odyssee* (Berlin 1972), 53-4; rejected by Hoekstra, n.21. Note that Apollo at Aes. *Eum.* 18 is described as the "fourth" in his line to be a *mantis*.

²³ P. Kett, *Prosopographie der historischen griechischen Manteis bis auf die Zeit Alexanders des Grossen* (Diss. Nürnberg 1966). All subsequent diviners identified by Kett numbers, where possible.

²⁴ L. Weniger, "Die Seher von Olympia," *ARW* 18 (1915): 53-115. Cf. U. v. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos von Epidauros = Neue philologische Untersuchungen* 9 (Berlin 1886), 179-85. The Clytidae are "Clytiadae;" see Weniger 59 and Hdt. 9.33.1. Add Telmessus in Caria, a city of seers (Arrian, *An.* 2.3.3, Cicero, *de Div.* 1.91); its most famous son, Aristander, Alexander's *mantis*. See also A.S. Pease, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Divinatione Liber Primus* (Urbana 1920), vol. II, 257-8 ad loc.

But Theoclymenus' genealogy goes beyond merely stressing the frequency of seers in his lineage: his ancestors are among the most famous *manteis* of Greek myth, suggesting perhaps both the unimpeachable aristocratic pedigree of his family, and yet simultaneously the "outsider" status of some of its members (Melampus a prisoner; Polyphides an exile; Theoclymenus an outcast murderer). This aspect suggests that while certainly aristocratic, these warrior-seers are also detached from the elite. Considerable epic lore especially surrounded both the figures of Melampus and Amphiaraus. The "Departure of Amphiaraus" (Ἀμφιαράου ἐξέλασις), in which the hero knowingly goes to his doom, was a well known legend that formed a part of the Epic Cycle (*Theb.* T 7 & 8, F 9 Bernabé). Moreover, he had an oracular shrine at Oropus, one that, to judge from Herodotus' account of Croesus' test of oracles (1.49, 52), was held in high esteem, a rival even to Delphi. Herodotus is also the authority for a strange rule concerning Oropus: the Thebans could not consult this oracle because the priestess there once gave them a choice: Amphiaraus could either be a *mantis* to them or a warrior, but not both. They chose the latter (Hdt.8.134.2). The story of Melampus and his descendents was told in both the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (FF 37, 135-6 Merkelbach-West) and *Melampodia* (FF 270-79 Merkelbach-West), as well as by the mythographer Pherecydes of Athens (FF 114-18 Fowler).²⁵ Indeed, Melampus gets most of the attention in the digression in Book 15 of the *Odyssey*, and his story is also told in even more detail in Book 11 (281-97):²⁶ a native of Pylos, he defeats Neleus after much travail, gives Neleus' daughter Pero to his brother to wed, and himself goes off to Argos to be king. Herodotus presents us with a related account that features Melampus extorting half the kingdom of Argos and one-third for his brother as a price for his healing of maddened women (Hdt. 9.34; see below). Pindar reports an alternative version of the same legend (*Pae.* 4.28-31 Maehler): Melampus did not go off to Argos to be king, for this would have entailed giving up his mantic ability, as though the two spheres of activity could not reside in the same person—being a seer and being a king.²⁷ Recall, too, that the Thebans could not have the services of an Amphiaraus who was both warrior and *mantis*.

²⁵ M.L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford 1985), 79-82; I. Löffler, *Die Melampodie. Versuch einer Rekonstruktion des Inhalts* (Meisenheim am Glan 1963).

²⁶ Cf. A. Heubeck, *Der Odyssee-Dichter und die Ilias* (Erlangen 1954), 20-21.

²⁷ Cf. I. Rutherford, *Pindar's Paeans* (Oxford 2001), 287-88. Bacchylides does

A passage from the *Melampodia* deserves special attention. F 278 Merkelbach-West recounts that Calchas and Amphilocheus, the son of Amphiarus, were on their way back from Troy (cf. Hdt. 7.91) when they encountered near Claros the Argonaut and *mantis* Mopsus, who in this story is in fact the son of Manto, the daughter of Teiresias (see above; she is also sometimes the wife of Alcmaeon).²⁸ The two seers agree to a riddle-competition; Calchas loses, and then dies of grief.²⁹ The account comes to us by way of Strabo (14.1.27), who reports that both Pherecydes (F 142 Fowler) and Sophocles (*TrGF* IV F 180) told the same story with minor differences. The *topos* of the “Rätselkampf” or riddle-competition followed by the death of the loser is a fairly common one in Greek myth (cf. Oedipus and the Sphinx),³⁰ and indeed is linked to the broader theme of the competition between learned men (e.g. the *certamen* of Homer and Hesiod; the contest between the Seven Sages for the Tripod of Miletus/Cup of Bathycles).³¹ But with that said, the story of Calchas and Mopsus raises the idea of a competition between *manteis*, one that I will return to when we look again at the story of Onomacritus and Lasus.

While the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* provide us with information about several famous seers of myth and their relationship to other heroes, we also catch glimpses in the *Odyssey* specifically of nameless religious experts. In Book 1 Telemachus extends the Homeric formula “I/we put no stock in prophecy” (οὔτε θεοπροπίης ἐμπάζομαι/ἐμπαζόμεθ’, ἦν... *Il.* 16.50, *Od.* 2.201), and mentions “the sort of prophecy that my mother investigates, having summoned a seer (θεοπρόπος) to the house” (*Od.* 1.415-6). Aeschylus, too, presents outsiders who are retained by

place Melampus in Argos, for he goes from there to found a cult of Apollo (*Pae.* 4.50-54 Maehler).

²⁸ Cf. D. Lyons, “Manto and *Manteia*: Prophecy in the Myths and Cults of Heroines,” in Chirassi Colombo and Seppilli, eds., *Sibille e Linguaggi Oracolari* (n.5), 232-3, 236.

²⁹ For more on “riddles,” see Struck in this volume, xxx - xxx.

³⁰ K. Ohlert, *Rätsel und Rätselspiele der alten Griechen* (Berlin 1912), 28-9; cf. O. Immisch, “Klaros. Forschungen über griechische Stiftungssagen,” *Jahrbücher für klassische Philologie* Supp. 17 (1890): 160-65; Löffler, *Melampodie* (n.25), 48-9.

³¹ Cf. B. Graziosi, “Competition in wisdom,” in F. Budelmann and P. Michelakis, eds., *Homer, Tragedy and Beyond. Essays in honour of P.E. Easterling* (London 2001), 57-74; J.S. Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos* (Cambridge 2003), 178-80; K. Kuiper, “Le Récit de la Coupe de Bathyclès,” *REG* 29 (1916): 404-29; W. Wiersma, “The Seven Sages and the Prize of Wisdom,” *Mnemosyne* 1 ser.3 (1934): 150-54; A. Kerkhecker, *Callimachus’ Book of Iambi* (Oxford 1999), 35 and n.153.

the royal house to interpret dreams and other divine signs (*Ag.* 409 δόμων προφήται, *Cho.* 32 δόμων ὄνειρόμαντις).³² But most illuminating is another passage from the *Odyssey*. When Eumaeus responds to Antinous' insulting remark about bringing the beggar to the palace, the swineherd responds: "now who, going out himself, summons an utter stranger from elsewhere |, unless he be one of those who are public workers (δημιοεργοί) |, a *mantis*, or a healer of ills, or a builder in wood |, or even a divine bard who can delight with his singing..." (*Od.* 17.382-85).

I cannot hope to discuss fully a passage whose significance Walter Burkert has devoted an entire book to.³³ But what must be noted here is the social status of the *mantis* that seems to be indicated: the seer to whom Eumaeus refers is clearly of the class of "public workers," an intermediate group between the nobility and their retainers and slaves. For Burkert this passage evokes the highly mobile world of cultural interaction between East and West in the dark and early archaic periods. He argues that the first independent diviners were itinerant experts, and that many of them were non-Greeks from the Near East. He notes, for instance, that "Mopsus," mentioned above, is a Cilician name found at Karatepe belonging to a king, and that far from being a descendant of Teiresias, he was an easterner whom the Greeks appropriated; moreover, even if Greek, it is Mopsus of Cilicia in Asia who defeats Calchas.³⁴ Burkert asserts that these figures were pivotal in the transfer of "oriental" wisdom to the West.³⁵ Morris supports Burkert's understanding of the significance of *Od.* 17.383, and adds a number of other cases that she sees preserved in the material record: mobile, polyglot eastern priests familiar with the religious practices of a number of cultures.³⁶ It is worth remembering here

³² Fraenkel, *Agamemnon* (n.16), vol. II, 214 ad loc. Cf. Fascher, Προφήτης (n.5), 13-14.

³³ *The Orientalizing Revolution. Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, M.E. Pinder and W. Burkert, trans. (Cambridge MA 1992), esp. 6-7 and n.29.

³⁴ W. Burkert, "Itinerant Diviners and Magicians: A Neglected Element in Cultural Contacts," in R. Hägg, ed., *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.: Tradition and Innovation* (Stockholm 1983), 117.

³⁵ Burkert, *Orientalizing Revolution* (n.33), ch.2, esp. 23-5; also idem, "Itinerant Diviners and Magicians" (n.34), 115-19.

³⁶ S.P. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art* (Princeton 1992), 107-8, and cf. 115-6. Also M.L. West, *The East Face of Helicon. West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford 1997), 610-11.

that, according to Herodotus, Melampus learned seercraft (*mantikê*) in Egypt, and brought it, along with other religious lore, to the Greeks (Hdt. 2.49.2).³⁷ But this is not the place to discuss the processes by which knowledge and expertise, religious and otherwise, were spread to the Greek world.³⁸ It is enough to note that Eumaeus' words from the *Odyssey* leave no doubt that the seer was often an outsider, called in by aristocrats for his specialist knowledge. Indeed, Finley argued that while some seers and doctors in all likelihood had to be noble (the heroic ones discussed above), the passage makes clear that others came from a group of non-elite specialists.³⁹ Solon, too, produces a similar list of experts that includes the *mantis* (West² 13.37-62: merchant, farmer, craftsman, poet, *mantis*, healer).⁴⁰ An anecdote from Herodotus even suggests that these specialists could form friendships among themselves: the famous doctor Democedes of Croton engineered the release from Darius' prison of an Elean *mantis* who had served Polycrates of Samos (Hdt. 3.132.2; cf. 124.1).

The nameless, itinerant religious expert of the *Odyssey* seems a fitting bridge to the legendary seers of Greek tradition. These figures are to be contrasted with the heroic *manteis* insofar as they have no role in Archaic epic poetry, and are even less well-known than their epic brethren, indeed often only names that are attached to later collections of oracles: Orpheus, Musaeus, and Bacis, as well as shamans such as Epimenides, Aristeas, and Abaris.

Orpheus is an exceedingly complex and multifaceted figure.⁴¹ Although frequently mentioned along with Musaeus as a poet who predates Hesiod and Homer,⁴² the description of him as a *mantis* is

³⁷ A.B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II Commentary 1-98* (Leiden 1976), 224-5.

³⁸ Cf. K.A. Raaflaub, "Influence, Adaptation, and Interaction: Near Eastern and Early Greek Political Thought," in S. Aro and R.M. Whiting, eds., *The Heirs of Assyria = Melammu Symposia I* (Helsinki 2000), 51-64; N. Wasserman, rev. West's *East Face of Helicon*, *SCI* 20 (2001): 261-67.

³⁹ M.I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (Harmondsworth 1979), 55; cf. 37.

⁴⁰ Cf. [Aes.] *PV* 475-506 (medicine, *mantikê*, and metallurgy). At Soph.'s *Ant.* 360-67 divination is oddly absent, even though humanity has found many helps for the uncertainties of the future, including medicine.

⁴¹ I.M. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* (Berkeley 1941); F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* = *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 33 (Berlin and New York 1974); M.L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford 1983), esp. Ch. 1; and Graf, "Orpheus: A Poet among Men," in J. Bremmer, ed., *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London and Sydney 1987), 80-106.

⁴² West, *Orphic Poems* (n.41), 40 and n.2: the sequence of the early poets is uni-

relatively late: the Atthidographer Philochorus (4th/3rd) is credited by Clement of Alexandria as “recording” (ἱστορεῖ) that Orpheus was in fact a *mantis* in the first book of his *Peri Mantikês*, a point also made by the scholiast to Euripides’ *Alcestis* (*FGrHist* 328 FF 76, 77; cf. Kern F 332).⁴³ Jacoby argued that because Orpheus is absent from the Onomacritus/Lasus story in Herodotus, there were in the mid-fifth century no oracles yet ascribed to him.⁴⁴ On the other hand, already in Herodotus, Musaeus is referred to repeatedly as an author of a collection of oracles (Hdt. 7.6.3, 8.96.2, 9.43.2), and, as mentioned above, may even have been called a chresmologue by Sophocles (*TrGF* IV F 1116), though this fragment is problematic. The great difficulty regarding Musaeus is that he is little more than a name to us; in fact, even this is suspect, meaning as it does “belonging to the Muses,” all too convenient for a poet-figure.⁴⁵ Some time before the end of the fifth century he was made the originator of the lineage of the Eumolpidae of Eleusis (cf. Plato *Resp.* 363c = DK 2 A 5a, Philochorus *FGrHist* 328 F 208 = DK 2 A 6).⁴⁶ Aristophanes speaks of Musaeus as a source of both oracles and cures for disease (*Frogs* 1033), and a number of poetic works were later ascribed to him: *Precepts*, *Eumolpia*, as well as a theogony, a piece entitled *Sphaera*, and some hymns.⁴⁷

Bacis, too, is an extremely shadowy figure. Herodotus attributes to him no less than four oracles, twice pairing him with Musaeus (8.20.2, 8.77.1-2, 8.96.2, 9.43.2, the last two also Musaeus). But unlike Musaeus, Herodotus more often than not actually quotes Bacis, once even citing an eight-line text as part of a programmatic statement he makes in his own voice urging the need to accept unambiguously stated oracles (ἐνἀργέως Hdt. 8.77.1-2).⁴⁸ It seems as though for Herodotus,

form (Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod, Homer); Hippias D-K 86 B 6, Aristophanes *Frogs* 1032-35, Plato *Ap.* 41a, Chrysippus *SVF* II, 316.12.

⁴³ Cf. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung* (n.41), 17 and n.65.

⁴⁴ F. Jacoby, *FGrHist* IIIb vol. 2, 262 n.7.

⁴⁵ West, *Orphic Poems* (n.41), 39: the name is “a patent artificiality.”

⁴⁶ Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung* (n.41), 17-18; West, *Orphic Poems* (n.41),

41.

⁴⁷ Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung* (n.41), 13; West, *Orphic Poems* (n.41), 41-44.

⁴⁸ Cf. A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la Divination dans l'Antiquité* (Paris 1879, repr. Bruxelles 1963), vol. II, 107; D. Asheri, “Erodoto e Bacide. Considerazioni sulla fede di Erodoto negli oracoli (Hdt. VIII 77),” in M. Sordi, ed., *La profezia nel mondo antico* (Milano 1993), 63-76; Ph.-E. Legrand, “Hérodote croyait-il aux oracles?” in *Mélanges A.-M. Desrousseaux* (Paris 1937), 275-84. See also below.

Bacis was a more reliable source, presumably because he demonstrated precise oracular prediction, and Musaeus did not. Indeed, it is generally the case that the oracles of Bacis seem to have been better known and more influential than those of Musaeus.⁴⁹ Later authorities doubt Musaeus is even the author of the work attributed to him, believing it instead to be by Onomacritus, with the possible exception of a hymn to Demeter (e.g. Paus. 1.22.7, Clem. *Str.* 1.864 Migne). As with Musaeus, there is potentially a problem even with Bacis' name. Rohde argued some time ago, partly on the grounds that the tyrant Pisistratus had the nickname "Bacis" (scholia to Aristophanes *Peace* 1071; Suda s.v. Bacis), that the term was in reality a title denoting an inspired χρησμοφδός (cf. *Peace* 1119); he is called a *chrēsmologos* in the same testimonium. It is certainly the case that many "Bacides" were later known (cf. Clem. *Str.* 1.865 Migne), just as there were many Sibyls.⁵⁰ The scholiast to Aristophanes (on *Kn.* 123, *Peace* 1071, *Birds* 962), as well as Aelian (*VH* 12.35), note that there were in fact three Bacides: one from Eleon in Boeotia, one from Athens, and one from Arcadia. Because his oracles cited by Herodotus all have to do with the Persian War, especially the battle of Salamis, and because the Boeotian Bacis was thought to be the eldest, it is sometimes claimed that there was an actual ecstatic prophet by this name who was active at Eleon at the beginning of the 5th century.⁵¹ This seems to me to be too strong a claim; indeed, if one of the nicknames of Pisistratus was genuinely "Bacis," it would have to be demonstrably wrong. What is more, the application of the ἐπίθετον to the tyrant would have little meaning if there were not oracles attributed to a Bacis already in the 6th.⁵² It is certainly the case that by the time of Aristophanes, he was precisely a stock figure whose legendary status was taken for granted, as in the famous scene in the *Knights* when the Sausage Seller claims that Bacis had a brother named "Glanis" (*Kn.* 1004: a type of catfish),

⁴⁹ See D-K 2 A 1, 4, 5, and cf. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la Divination* (n.48), vol. II, 111; L. Prandi, "Considerazioni su Bacide e le raccolte oracolari greche," *CISA* 19 (1993): 51-62.

⁵⁰ Rohde, *Psyche* (n.1), 292 and n.58; cf. I. Trencsényi-Waldapfel, "Die Weissagen des Bakis," in his *Untersuchungen zur Religionsgeschichte* (Amsterdam 1966), 233-4; J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley 1978), 159.

⁵¹ E.g., D.M. MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens* (Oxford 1995), 195; A.H. Sommerstein, *The Comedies of Aristophanes* vol. 2. *Knights* (Warminster 1981), 150 ad 123.

⁵² Olson, *Aristophanes Peace* (n.7), 273-4 ad 1070-1.

also a *mantis*.⁵³ The scholiast to Aristophanes *Peace* 1071 reports that many miracles were attributed to Bacis by the fourth century historian Theopompus of Chios, among which was the purification of maddened women at Sparta, and that it was Apollo who made him a purifier (*FGrHist* 115 F 77). This is significant testimony for it suggests that Theopompus regarded Bacis as a kind of shamanistic holy-man, a characterization he also promoted in connection with Pherecydes of Syrus and Epimenides of Crete.⁵⁴

We are on somewhat firmer ground when we turn to Epimenides, but only just. The Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* reports that he purified Athens after the slaughter by the Alcmeonids of the followers of Cylon who had fled to “the altar of the goddess” for protection (*Ath. Pol.* 1.1 and Heraclid. Lemb. *Ep.*); indeed it was through the expulsion of the Alcmeonids that he effected the purification of the city. If accurate, this notice suggests that he was active in the late 7th and early 6th.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Plato seems to think he was active in the late 6th and early 5th, and prophesied about the Persian Wars (*Lg.* 642d-e), though in this dating he seems very much in the minority. Epimenides was believed to have authored verse oracles, the most famous of which was the dictum cited by Paul in his Epistle to Titus (1.12): “Cretans are always liars, wicked beasts, good-for-nothing stomachs” (Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύδονται, κακὰ θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαί *FGrHist* 457 F 2).⁵⁶ In the scholia to Lucian he is even referred to as a chresmologue (*FGrHist* 457 T 8a apparat.). Svenbro argued that Epimenides combines several aspects of the ancient holy man: purifier, exegete, and oracle. The common thread uniting all these activities is that he “possessed knowledge that could guide people safely through a crisis.”⁵⁷

Diogenes Laertius provides a very full life of Epimenides (1.109-15

⁵³ Cf. O. Weinreich, “Die Seher Bakis und Glanis. Ein Witz des Aristophanes,” *ARW* 27 (1929): 57-60; Trencsényi-Waldapfel, “Die Weissagungen des Bakis” (n.50), 232-3.

⁵⁴ Pherecydes, seer and shaman: Theopompus, *FGrHist* 115 F 71 = D-K 7 A 1 (Diogenes Laertius 1.116-7).

⁵⁵ H. Diels, “Über Epimenides von Kreta,” *Sitz. der kgl. pr. Akad. der Wiss. Berlin* (1891): 388-92 (= Diels, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte der antiken Philosophie*, W. Burkert, ed. [Hildesheim 1969], 37-41); P.J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford 1981), 81-2.

⁵⁶ Paul makes this statement in connection with people who look very much like *agurtai* (see below).

⁵⁷ J. Svenbro, *Phrasikleia. An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece*, J. Lloyd trans. (Cornell 1993), 136.

= *FGrHist* 457 T 1, DK 2 A 1), but containing many folkloric elements, several from Theopompus (*FGrHist* 115 FF 67a, 69). The son of Phaestius, he was from Knossos; sent one day to look for lost sheep he dozed off in a cave and slept for 57 years. Thanks to this miracle he became famous throughout Greece and was widely regarded as most beloved of the gods. In addition to purifying Athens, he allegedly also brokered a treaty between that city and Knossos. He died in extreme old age (154 or 157 years). He was believed to have been given special food by the Nymphs, but was never seen actually to eat. Diogenes also claims to know two letters written by him to Solon, one of which he quotes; he also reports that Epimenides wrote both poetry (a *Theogony* and a poem on the Kouretai and Korybantes) and prose treatises (*On Sacrifice*, *On the Cretan Constitution*, and *On Minos and Rhadamanthus*). Perhaps most remarkably, he states that the Spartans still guard Epimenides' body in obedience to an oracle (Sosibius of Sparta, *FGrHist* 595 F 15). The *Suda* provides even more spectacular details: during his life his soul was able to leave his body whenever it wished, and when he died, his corpse was found to be tattooed with writing (τὸ δέρμα εὐρήσθαι γράμμασι κατάστικτον), giving rise to the proverbial expression "Epimenidean skin" for "secret things" (DK 3 A 2 = *Suda* s.v. Epimenides), no doubt oracular in nature. Dodds was right to see in all this material the pattern of the Greek shaman: a clairvoyant capable of supernatural feats, whose very life seems to defy death (waking after long sleep, apparent fasting, psychic excursion).⁵⁸

Of chief importance from Epimenides' life for this discussion is his position as an outsider who, as an agent of the divine, solves the internal problems of Athens. As we saw also with the heroic *mantis*, he has a complex relationship to the elite: although a foreigner, he is imagined as being on friendly terms with Solon, and yet is also responsible for the expulsion of the Alcmeonids. Also important in his story is the issue of writing. Svenbro observed that with the tattooed corpse of Epimenides we see a rare fusion of writer and his writing.⁵⁹ I would push this further and suggest that the story of the writing on his body, as well as the proverb, seem to be about the control of

⁵⁸ E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951), 141; cf. Svenbro, *Phrasikleia* (n.57), 138. Similar shamanistic *manteis*—Aristeas and Abaris, both noticed by Herodotus (4.13-16, 4.36); see J.D.P. Bolton, *Aristeas of Proconnesus* (Oxford 1962).

⁵⁹ Svenbro, *Phrasikleia* (n.57), 140-41.

Epimenides' oracular wisdom: the early *manteis* were important primarily as sources of oracles for later figures, and often disputes arose as to what were their authentic prophecies. Do we not see reflected in the bizarre tale of Epimenides' written body a unique solution to this difficulty? The *mantis* becomes himself the repository of his authentic prophecies regarding the future. In Epimenides' case, there could be no argument about whether an oracle was a later, forged addition. And note, too, that his body was kept in Sparta, a place where it also happens that we have one of the earliest references to the storage of written oracles (Hdt. 6.57.4: the kings and Pythioi are guardians of the oracles), but more on this below.

III. *The Independent Diviner in the Archaic and Classical Ages*

Of course it is illusory to divide the material on independent diviners between an earlier, mythical period, and a later, historical one, for the first category is but a creation of the second. Nonetheless the divide is useful if only because it forces us to recognize that when the historical *mantis* and chresmologue do appear, they do so equipped with important predecessors. Lloyd has written eloquently of both the continuities and ruptures evident in the move between the bronze age to the archaic and then classical periods. He noted that the emergence of the city state in particular necessitated a corresponding increase in the centers of authority, "both what *we* should call political, and religious and intellectual, leadership" (his stress). It is for this reason that there seems to be such an explosion of "wise men" figures in the seventh and sixth centuries, among whom are precisely our *manteis* and chresmologues, some of whom I have already discussed.⁶⁰ Humphreys has also spoken of the same period as one that saw a massive elaboration of the structuring of Greek society, during which time the independent diviner emerged as one of highly differentiated group of religious authorities.⁶¹ I do not want to dispute these observations, but it does need to be pointed out that while societal differentiation may indeed have been widespread in the archaic, one that resulted in an extension and elaboration of leadership of all types, the independent

⁶⁰ G.E.R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience* (Cambridge 1979), 249.

⁶¹ Humphreys, *Anthropology and the Greeks* (n.17), 254.

diviner especially comes into view because of the attempts of political leaders to control the channels of religious authority. We have differentiation, yes, but also an attempt at the consolidation of authority. The independent religious expert, be he *mantis* or chresmologue, was always precisely that, independent. His activities might be in the service of powerful chiefs, or, in the case of fifth century Athens and Sparta, of an entire *polis*, but he seems always positioned outside the political structure of the state, essential to but also separate from the governance of the *polis*. Allied to this point is the noteworthy fact that, excepting those from Athens, most of the figures we will be looking at in this section come from the NW Peloponnese, Elis especially, the home of the Iamidae (cf. Hdt. 9.33.1, Paus. 6.2.5), and other nearby areas (Arcadia, Acarnania—directly north across the Gulf of Corinth), regions that all lacked large urban settlements (the city of Elis proper only came into existence at the end of the first quarter of the fifth century).⁶² Even at Athens, where the strongest case can be made for the incorporation of the independent diviner into the apparatus of the state, it will be seen upon close inspection that he was still acting for himself, but often in ways that coincided with the interests of the city.⁶³

Without doubt the two most active periods for independent divination in the Greek world were the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars which bracket the fifth century. It is also true that a thread of continuity exists between these two nodes of activity in the role that Athenian diviners play in the expansion of that city's empire in the intervening years. In this period, in addition, the term *chrēsmologos* emerges. To be sure Herodotus employs it to describe earlier figures such as Ono-

⁶² Diod. 11.54.1, Strabo 8.3.2; see C. Morgan, *Athletes and Oracles. The Transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the eighth century BC* (Cambridge 1990), 51. Olympia was unusual—not an independent *polis*, rather a marginal “inter-state sanctuary.” Morgan, *Athletes and Oracles*, 223-33; and F. de Polignac, *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-State*, J. Lloyd, trans. (Chicago 1995), 38-9.

Of the seers in Kett's *Prosopographie* (n.23), one-third come from the western part of the Greek mainland and neighboring islands; the next region is Athens and Attica, with c. one-fifth. Although W.K. Pritchett, “The Military *Mantikē*” in *The Greek State at War* Part III: Religion (Berkeley 1979), 52-3; and Kett himself, *Prosopographie* 82, dispute that there was any one region that was associated with seers, otherwise important places such as Corinth and Sparta can claim very few (1 and 2 respectively), and they are often shadowy figures. I make no claims about origins, just frequency.

⁶³ Cf. J.K. Davies, “Greece after the Persian Wars,” *CAH* V (Cambridge 1992), 30.

macritus, but there are no uses of the term antedating the historian. Before this time we see chiefly *manteis*, even if later authorities call them chresmologues. But earlier than these more active periods, we have three sets of solid evidence for independent diviners: references to seers in Greek literature; the strong interest in divination at the court of Pisistratus and his sons; and the existence of certain families connected with independent divination, with genealogies going back into the archaic period. We should also add two other supporting sets of material—not completely firm perhaps, rather inferences from later practice: the almost certain presence of diviners in colonization, and their documented role in military campaigns. I will pursue all these lines of approach, moving roughly from the archaic to the classical periods.

First, there are several references in Greek literature before the Persian Wars to *manteis*. Many of these have already been discussed, but it needs to be added that, with the exception of epic material, they are chiefly generic: an individual, named person is never identified as a *mantis*, though (as we saw above) a deity can be. Importantly, however, poets can assume the persona of a *mantis* in their poetry: thus Archilochus evidently speaks as one in an obscene fragment (F 25.5 West²),⁶⁴ as does Theognis later, if we accept Nagy's interpretation of the lines in question (681-2).⁶⁵ Similarly, Pindar styles himself a prophet of the Muses (*Pae.* 6.6 Maehler). In the first two cases, the poets appears to be uttering *ainigmata* ("riddles") that conceal hidden truths.⁶⁶ More typical are references to the whole class of *manteis* as experts, such as we saw in Solon 13.53. Another good example is Theognis line 545, where the poet tells Cynos that he feels compelled to judge a legal case fairly, "employing *manteis*, bird omens and burning sacrifices" to bring about a just verdict.

While the larger subject of tyrants and divination is a familiar one that falls outside the limits of this paper,⁶⁷ I wish to focus on the activity

⁶⁴ Archilochus F 183 West² refers to a *mantis*, Batousiades son of Selleus, but we do not know if he was called *mantis* in the poem.

⁶⁵ G. Nagy, "Theognis of Megara: A Poet's Vision of his City," in T.J. Figuera and G. Nagy, eds., *Theognis of Megara: Poetry and the Polis* (Baltimore 1985), 24-5; cf. eundem, *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (Baltimore 1990), 426 and n.58.

⁶⁶ Nagy, "Theognis of Megara" (n.65), 25 n.2 connects Theog. line 682 with Solon 13.51-4, as well as with Theoclymenus at *Od.* 20.367-8.

⁶⁷ E.g., Morgan, *Athletes and Oracles* (n.62), 178-83; H. Brandt, "Pythia, Apollon

of independent diviners at the courts of tyrants and kings. They are often seen as counselors to strongmen. Herodotus reports, for instance, that Polycrates, tyrant of Samos, was advised by *manteis* not to go to Oroetes, who had set a trap for him (3.124.1). And *manteis* twice show up in helping to decide succession disputes for the kingship at Sparta (Hdt. 6.69.3: the removal of Demaratus;⁶⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.3 Leotychidas unsuccessfully supported by Diopeithes).⁶⁹ But the number of references to the activity of independent diviners at the court of Pisistratus and his sons in particular is so striking as to constitute a second category of evidence by itself for archaic *manteis* and chresmologues; indeed, David Lewis has called it “a quite abnormal assembly.”⁷⁰ Although the sources are invariably later (mainly Herodotus), the period of the tyranny at Athens presents us with a wealth of references to mantic activity by the Pisistratids themselves, as well as the first notices we have of chresmologues.

It is best to begin with Pisistratus’ third and last attempt to establish his tyranny at Athens. Herodotus tells us that, just before the battle of Pellene in 546, Pisistratus was given a divine signal that he would be successful:

Then, under the urging of divine guidance (θείη πομπῇ χρεώμενος), Amphilytus, the Acarnanian chresmologic man (χρησμολόγος ἀνήρ), stood by Pisistratus; he approached him and prophesied in hexameter verse, speaking as follows: “the cast is thrown, the net has been spread out, | the tunny-fish will dart throughout the moonlit night.” Now he prophesied these things being in an inspired state (ἐνθεάζων), and Pisistratus received the oracle and said that he accepted what had been prophesied and led on his army (Hdt. 1.62.4-63.1).

The tuna are of course the Athenians who are taken by surprise in the subsequent combat, and are forced to accept the rule of Pisis-

und die älteren griechischen Tyrannen,” *Chiron* 28 (1998): 194-212.

⁶⁸ Cf. W. Burkert, “Demaratos, Astrabakos und Herakles. Königsmythos und Politik zur Zeit der Perserkriege (Herodot 6, 67-69),” *MH* 22 (1965): 166-77.

⁶⁹ Diopeithes, Kett, *Prosopographie*, no. 22. He may be the same as the diviner attacked in comedy. J. Hatzfeld, *Xénophon Helléniques* (Paris 1936), I 131.1 ad loc. for the connection; cf. P. Krentz, *Xenophon Hellenika* 2.3.11-4.2.8 (Warminster 1995), 177 ad loc. See Arist. *Birds* 988, *Knights* 1085, *Wasps* 380. Many doubt: e.g. N. Dunbar, *Aristophanes Birds* (Oxford 1995), 550 ad loc. Note also that King Agesilaus has his “own” *mantis* at Aulis, Plut. *Ages.* 6.5.

⁷⁰ “The Tyranny of the Pisistratidae,” in *CAH*² IV (Cambridge 1988), 293. Cf. H.A. Shapiro, “Oracle-Mongers in Peisistratid Athens,” *Kernos* 3 (1990): 335-45.

tratus, this time for good. It is important to connect the passage to points made in the preceding sections. Note that the term *chrêsmologos* is here used as an adjective to describe Amphilytus (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 6), modifying the noun *anêr*. Clearly the force of the collocation is “chresmologue,” but one who prophesies, that is, who functions in a way that we might expect of a *mantis*.⁷¹ What is more, he is from Acarnania, western Greece, a region associated with itinerant independent diviners.⁷² While it might be tempting to suppose that Herodotus is trying to diminish Amphilytus’ authority by describing him with a term that has derogatory force, especially at Athens, we should note the overall tone of the passage. The historian clearly wants us to believe that Amphilytus was in fact divinely inspired: in his own voice he reports that the chresmologue was under divine guidance (θείῃ πομπῇ χρεώμενος),⁷³ and when he resumes his narrative after reporting the hexameter oracle, he again notes that Amphilytus was possessed by a god (ἐνθεάζων).⁷⁴ It is also worthwhile pointing out that unlike the diviner in myth who is often in conflict with the chieftain, here he authorizes the leader’s plans and is evidently a close associate.

In the very next section Herodotus tells us that one of Pisistratus’ achievements after he gained control of Athens was the purification of Delos, something he undertook ἐκ τῶν λογίων (“because of a prophecy”)—an admittedly vague phrase, but one that suggests an independent diviner and not an institutional oracular response.⁷⁵ Finally, in connection with Pisistratus himself, it is important to remember that, according to the scholiast on Aristophanes *Peace* 1071, he had the nickname “Bacis.” It is hard to know what precisely the significance of this might have been (the scholiast does not explain), but at the very least it connects *mantikê* with the tyrant himself. This does not have to mean that Pisistratus was believed to have acted as a *mantis* himself, though we shall soon see that one of his sons evidently did. It may

⁷¹ Cf. B.M. Lavelle, “The Compleat Angler: Observations on the Rise of Peisistratos in Herodotus (1.59-64),” *CQ* 41 (1991): 317 n.3. Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.3: another “chresmologic” man.

⁷² Cf. W.W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford 1928), vol. I, 85 ad loc.; Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle* (n.50), 158.

⁷³ See J.E. Powell, *A Lexicon to Herodotus* (Cambridge 1938, repr. 1960), s.v. πομπή. Also LSJ s.v. χράω III.1; J. Kirchberg, *Die Funktion der Orakel im Werke Herodots*, *Hypomnemata* 11 (Göttingen 1965), 70.

⁷⁴ Lavelle, “Rise of Peisistratos” (n.71), 318, 323-4.

⁷⁵ Plural for singular: Powell, *Lexicon* (n.73), s.v. λόγιον.

perhaps imply only that he was widely known to have had an interest in these matters.⁷⁶ It is further reasonable to suppose that Pisistratus saw the advantages of being connected to the machinery of revealing divine will,⁷⁷ but there is no reason to assume that the nickname was a cynical manipulation.⁷⁸ The tyrant and his sons were conventionally observant when it came to religious matters (cf. Thuc. 6.54.5).

As for Pisistratus' sons, Herodotus provides us with a lot of evidence suggesting that divination was of more than passing interest to them. Perhaps most importantly, we are told that when Cleomenes of Sparta took the Acropolis of Athens as part of an attempt to restore Hippias to power (c.504), he found there and kept "oracles (χρησμούς) that the Pisistratids had owned before, but on being driven out [of Athens], had left in the temple" (Hdt. 5.90.2). This can only mean that the Pisistratids had a collection of written oracles in their possession;⁷⁹ a significant matter, for this passage and the one dealing with the hereditary responsibility of the kings and Pythioi of guarding oracles at Sparta (Hdt. 6.57.4) are our two earliest references to the storage of written prophetic texts. From Herodotus we also gather that the sons of Pisistratus themselves were involved in mantic matters. So, on the night before he was assassinated in the *pompē* of the Great Panathenaia of 514, Hipparchus had a dream that so disturbed him that he took it to "dream-interpreters" (ὄνειροπόλοι) for an explanation (Hdt. 5.56.2). Hippias, for his part, interpreted his own dream shortly before the battle of Marathon—indeed, he also reinterpreted it later in light of an ominous event (Hdt. 6.107.2-4). Further, in response to Sosicles' advice that the Spartans not reinstall Hippias, the tyrant swore by the gods that the Corinthians would some day regret that they did not support his return to Athens; while itself unexceptional, the oath takes on special significance because Herodotus goes on to explain that Hippias replied in this way "inasmuch as he was the most expertly knowledgeable of men concerning oracles" (οἷά τε τοὺς χρησμούς ἀτρεκέστατα ἀνδρῶν ἐξεπιστάμενος Hdt. 5.93.2).

⁷⁶ Cf. C. Catenacci, *Il tiranno e l'eroe. Per un' archeologia nella Grecia antica* (Milan 1996), 109 and n.194; A. Giuliani, *La città e l'oracolo. I rapporti tra Atene e Delfi in età arcaica e classica* (Milan 2001), 26 and n.4.

⁷⁷ Thus F. Schachermeyr, "Peisistratos von Athen," in K.H. Kinzl, ed., *Die ältere Tyrannis bis zu den Perserkriegen*. Wege der Forschung 510 (Darmstadt 1979), 99.

⁷⁸ Cf. Lewis, "The Tyranny of the Pisistratidae" (n.70), 294.

⁷⁹ Cf. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer* (n.65), 158-59.

Not only does this passage make Hippias out as a kind of oracular expert, his oath becomes a kind of prophetic statement,⁸⁰ and Hippias, a chresmologue/*mantis*. Here, most remarkably, the independent diviner is not an associate of the chieftain, as Amphilytus was, he is the political leader himself.

It is against this wider background of Pisistratid interest in divination that we must look again at the Onomacritus episode from Herodotus. The event occurred in the kingship of Xerxes, before the invasion of 480, but Herodotus' *logos* makes reference also to Onomacritus' earlier activities at the court of the Pisistratids, in the last decades of the sixth century. When Herodotus reports that Hipparchus exiled the diviner despite their closeness, we are bound to ask, Why? Lewis assumed that Hipparchus had a genuine interest in oracles, and that it was basically religious scruple that compelled him to exile his friend and associate: for Hipparchus oracles were not "a mere political tool."⁸¹ Alternatively, it might be that Hipparchus had no choice in exiling Onomacritus, an explanation that at least accounts for their later reconciliation. This suggestion is related to the larger issue of the setting of the episode. We are told by Herodotus that Onomacritus was "caught red-handed" by Lasus, inserting (ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ ἀλούς...ἐμποιέων) into the oracles of Musaeus the prophecy concerning the disappearance of Lemnos under the sea (7.6.3). There can be no doubt what Herodotus meant with the phrase ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ ἀλούς, for an exact parallel occurs earlier in Book 6: king Leotychidas of Sparta is caught "in the act of sitting" (ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ δὲ ἀλούς...ἐπικατήμενος) upon a glove full of coins with which he had been bribed (Hdt. 6.72.2). The present participle in both cases (ἐμποιέων/ἐπικατήμενος) tells us precisely what action the man in question was caught "red-handed" doing (ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ ἀλούς): concealing graft on the one hand, and intruding a spurious prophecy on the other. Strictly speaking, if Lasus had caught Onomacritus forging in writing an oracle of Musaeus ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ, this would mean he would have had to have been standing over Onomacritus' shoulder when he wrote the verses. While it is certainly true that the other word Herodotus uses to describe Onomacritus in addition to chresmologue, the term "arranger" (*diathetês*), suggests

⁸⁰ Hippias' claim proves true (*ex eventu* no doubt). Cf. How and Wells, *Commentary on Herodotus* (n.72), vol. II, 55 ad loc.: it becomes "prophecy." Note that Orestes at Aes. *Cho.* 540ff. acts as his own dream-interpreter and *mantis*.

⁸¹ Lewis, "The Tyranny of the Pisistratidae" (n.70), 294.

an expert in the handling of written work (“an editor” or “redactor” almost), I do not think that this is the leading concept in the episode. It is possible, even probable, that Onomacritus also interpolated the Lemnos prophecy into Musaeus’ work in writing.⁸² But that is not how Lasus caught him. It is much more likely that Onomacritus was reciting the oracle.⁸³ And note that this is exactly what he does later at the court of Xerxes—he “recites” or “performs” his prophecies (Hdt. 7.6.4, 5: κατέλεγε, χρησμοδέων).⁸⁴

A passage from Theognis will help to make this point more clearly. At lines 805-10 Theognis makes the following observation:

An envoy (θεωρόν) sent to Delphi, Cynus, must take care
to be more true than scale or rule or lathe,
that man to whom the priestess of the god imparts
the oracle from out the wealthy shrine.
Any addition would negate the remedy,
and any cut would be a sacrilege (West trans.).

Are we to imagine that Theognis is here warning about messengers to oracular shrines (*theōroi*) who tamper with the written oracles before returning home, by either adding to them our cutting things out? For those who imagine Onomacritus being caught by Lasus in the act of writing out the interpolation regarding Lemnos, this passage would seem to offer a parallel. But there is nothing in these lines that requires us to understand that the divine communication was written down by the *theōros*. Quite simply the messenger is to repeat the oracle he heard and not introduce any changes, either by adding or removing words. This is what Onomacritus must have done. Neither the chresmologue nor the *theōros* was authorized to produce the oracle in question, only to “perform” it.⁸⁵ The *theōros* is merely a vehicle for conveying the divine communication.

But in what scenario can we imagine the Pisistratids both consult-

⁸² Cf. Paus. 1.34.4: Iophon of Knossos, an *exēgētēs*, produced hexameter responses attributed to Amphiaraus, but which Pausanias suspects. See Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle* (n.50), 163 and n.27.

⁸³ The verb ἐμποιέω can mean a written interpolation: e.g. Dion. Hal. 4.62.6, where written oracular texts are revealed as false by the absence of acrostics, but the circumstances are utterly different.

⁸⁴ Nagy, *Pindar's Homer* (n.65), 159. On “recite” for καταλέγω, cf. Xenophon *Smp.* 6.3: an actor reciting tetrameter verses.

⁸⁵ L. Maurizio, “Delphic Oracles as Oral Performances: Authenticity and Historical Evidence,” *CLAnt* 16 (1997): 315-6.

ing Onomacritus for his oracular expertise, and yet also having Lasus on hand to catch him in his deceit? Privitera suggested that Lasus' revelation of Onomacritus' fraud is very much like a contest between wise men. He further speculated that both men had been consulted for their opinions as to the meaning of some of Musaeus' oracles, and that Lasus' interpretation won out;⁸⁶ presumably, in the process, he revealed Onomacritus' understanding to be based on a fraudulent interpolation. It is tempting to speculate that Onomacritus and Lasus were involved in a public performance of oracular texts, and that this performance had a competitive aspect. There is a legendary antecedent of sorts for this: the story from the Hesiodic *Melampodia* featuring a riddle-competition between Calchas and Mopsus. Lasus himself was famous as a controversialist in antiquity: Aristophanes in *Wasps* (1410-11) preserves a barb he uttered in a contest with Simonides, and his quips were so well-known that they gave rise to a whole class of acidic one-liners, *lasismata*—"Lasus-isms" (Hesychius s.v.). Athenaeus preserves a story that emphasizes Lasus' ability to pun off of familiar terms, as well as to use word-play to duck responsibility (Athen. 8.338b-c). Furthermore, he is closely associated with the beginnings of dithyramb, specifically as the originator of the contest in dithyrambic poetry at Athens under the Pisistratids.⁸⁷ In other words, Lasus was a figure widely-known as expert in manipulating expressions and seeing novel meanings in them, and was no stranger to public contests. Such a man might very well be involved in a contest of interpretation with Onomacritus.

But however we are to understand the Onomacritus/Lasus episode in Herodotus, one thing is certain: Onomacritus' negative characterization. Herodotus tells us in no uncertain terms that he gave Xerxes the interpretations the king wanted to hear: he suppressed the ones foreboding difficulties for the planned invasion of Greece, and privileged the ones that suggested victory (7.6.4). We might suspect the same in connection with his interpolated oracle about Lemnos years earlier, for the Pisistratids had a long-standing interest in the area.⁸⁸ We should note, too, that when the Pisistratids praised his abilities at

⁸⁶ G.A. Privitera, *Laso di Ermione* (Roma 1965), 48.

⁸⁷ A.W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy*, 2nd ed. rev. T.B.L. Webster (Oxford 1962), 13-15. Lasus was also famous for lipogrammatic verse: Athen. 10.455c-d (and cf. *PMG* 704), an "asigmatic" hymn to *Demeter*, as well as *Centaurs*.

⁸⁸ Cf. Lewis, "The Tyranny of the Pisistratidae" (n.70), 298-9.

Xerxes' court, they spoke σεμνοὺς λόγους about him. The adjective σεμνός cuts two ways: it can indeed mean "holy" or (of humans) "august," but it can also mean "haughty" or "boastful." In fact, Oedipus in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (556; cf. 953) even refers contemptuously to Teiresias as a σεμνομάντις, that is, a self-promoting prophet who trumpets his own abilities and who provides conveniently supportive oracles for his employers.⁸⁹ To be sure the *sennoi logoi* are spoken by the Pisistratids and not by Onomacritus himself, but this should not stop us from seeing that this is the sort of person Onomacritus is according to Herodotus. He is our first clear case of the negatively shaded chresmologue. Amphilytus was similarly supportive of his strongman, but is not at all negatively characterized; indeed, Herodotus seems to go out of his way to assure us that Amphilytus' oracle was in fact divinely inspired.

I have already mentioned (p. 174) the third category of evidence suggesting the presence in the archaic period of independent diviners: the popular belief that being a seer was something connected to families—that the ability to prophesy could be inherited from one generation to the next. Generations of Iamidae and Clytidae, for example, are recorded in the massive inscription from Olympia (p. 174 and n.24). To be sure, the date of the document falls well outside our time frame, but there is other evidence supporting the view that these prophetic families were active in the archaic and early classical. In the introduction to *Olympian* 6, Pindar refers to the Iamid Hagesias as "the steward of the prophetic altar (βωμῷ τε μαντείῳ ταμίᾳς) of Zeus in Pisa" (line 5), a phrase Boeckh understood to be a reference to a hereditary office; indeed, later in the poem Pindar states that the oracular altar has been around since the foundation of the Olympic Games, as have the Iamidae (lines 70-71).⁹⁰ The impression one has from Pindar is that this family produced *manteis* from the time of the mythical *Stammvater* (Iamus) down to his latest descendant (Hagesias). Herodotus, too, knows of the continuity of the Iamid line. He implies that the same family was already well known for their *manteis* at the end of the sixth century, for he mentions the Iamid Callias (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 41) as present during the war between Croton and

⁸⁹ See, e.g., R.C. Jebb, *Sophocles. The Oedipus Tyrannus* (Cambridge 1914), 82 and J.C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles. The Oedipus Tyrannus* (Leiden 1967), 127 ad loc.

⁹⁰ A. Boeckh, *Pindari Opera* 2.2 (Leipzig 1821), 152.

Sybaris in 510 (Hdt. 5.44.2), and again later in 479, when the Iamid Teisamenus (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 64) was in the ranks of the Spartans at Plataea (9.33.1).⁹¹

Mention of these Iamidae raise two further areas to be considered in connection with independent diviners in the archaic period, areas that move us into the classical: colonization and warfare. Pindar's *Olympian* 6 is not only important as evidence for the belief in the transmission of *mantikê* over generations, it is also noteworthy for being our sole indication that *manteis* took part in colonization, and unfortunately even this passage is highly problematic. At the very beginning of *O.* 6, Hagesias is called the "joint-founder" (συνοικιστῆρ line 6) of Syracuse. Inasmuch as Hagesias was the winner of the mule race at Olympia in either 472 or 468, and Syracuse founded in 733, the description is palpably impossible. Indeed, the scholia to the line assert that the claim is not true, but add that it was made "to praise" Hagesias, and that he was descended from men who did participate in the founding of the city (τῶν συνοικισάντων). Alternatively, it has been suggested that the foundation referred to is not the original one of 733, but the synoecism and refoundation of Syracuse in 485.⁹² However we interpret the reference, it is our only evidence for the participation of *manteis* in colonization efforts in the archaic period. Malkin has drawn attention to this striking absence, but argues nonetheless that it is "probable" that independent diviners were involved in most colonizing missions.⁹³ By contrast, there is of course an abundance of information relating to the role of Delphi in early Greek colonization.⁹⁴

We do have clear cases of independent diviners involved in colonization, but they are later, almost all coming from the mid to late fifth century, and all Athenian imperial ventures, or nearly so. In 446 the cities of Euboea revolted from Athens. Pericles made two expeditions to the island, and following the second, crushed the revolt. The inhabitants of Hestiaea in particular were expelled from their city

⁹¹ Hdt. 9.33.1 is in fact τὸν [Teisamenus] ἑόντα Ἡλείον καὶ γένεος τοῦ Ἰαμιδέων Κλυτιάδην (-δου in S). Valckenaer deletes Κλυτιάδην; Hude brackets.

⁹² I. Malkin, *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece* (Leiden 1987), 96-7; cf. N. Luraghi, "Un *mantis* eleo nella Siracusa di Ierone: Agesia di Siracusa, Iamide di Stinfalo," *Klio* 79 (1997): 76-77.

⁹³ Malkin, *Religion and Colonization* (n.92), 112.

⁹⁴ Malkin, *Religion and Colonization* (n.92), 17-91. Cf. A.S. Pease, "Notes on the Delphic Oracle and Greek Colonization," *CP* 12 (1917): 1-20.

for the earlier “murder” of Athenian crews, and went by agreement to Macedonia (Thuc. 1.114, Theopompus *FGrHist* 115 F 387). They were replaced by settlers from Athens.⁹⁵ Hestiaea became known as Oreus, technically a cleruchy. During or shortly after the crisis Athens imposed a loyalty oath on Chalcis (*IG* I³ 40 = ML 52) that was to be guaranteed by sacrifice. In lines 64-66 of the inscription we are told that “the sacrifices required by the oracles on account of Euboea shall be performed as quickly as possible by Hierocles and three men chosen by the Boule from among its members” (Fornara trans.). The significance of this text comes out clearly when we set it beside an episode from Aristophanes’ *Peace*, produced some twenty-four years later (in 421). When Trygaeus and his slave are preparing a sacrifice, they catch sight of a garlanded figure:

TRYGAEUS. Now roast these nicely, because here comes somebody wearing a laurel crown.

SLAVE. Now who in the world is that? Looks like a charlatan (ἄλαζών). Is he a seer (μάντις)?

T. Certainly no seer, but evidently Hierocles, the oracle monger (χρησμολόγος) from Oreus (1043-47; Henderson trans.).

In the scene that follows Trygaeus and Hierocles engage in a competition of oracular citation, one that can be paralleled in other of Aristophanes’ plays. Scenes of this type have led Nilsson and others to suggest that there is a reality behind the humor: there were in fact competitions in the presentation of oracles in the Athens of Aristophanes’ day and before. Such a view connects perhaps with what we imagine may have occurred in the Onomacritus/Lasus episode, as well as with other cases (the “wooden wall” oracle and others involving anonymous chresmologues: see below).⁹⁶

The Hierocles whom we see in the *Peace* must be the same as the one mentioned in *IG* I³ 40 (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 39).⁹⁷ The two texts are not unconnected, for it seems that not only was Hierocles

⁹⁵ Cf. D. Lewis, “The Thirty Years’ Peace,” *CAH*² V (Cambridge 1992), 135.

⁹⁶ W. Furley, *Andokides and the Herms. A study of crisis in fifth-century Athenian religion*, *BICS* Supp. 65 (London 1996), 96 and n.18, citing M.P. Nilsson, *Cults, Myths, Oracles and Politics in Ancient Greece* (Göteborg 1951, repr. 1986), 130-42; F. Staehlin, *Das Motiv der Mantik im antiken Drama* (Giessen 1912), 172ff. (non vidi).

⁹⁷ So, e.g., Lewis, “The Thirty Years’ Peace” (n.95), 135; R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* (Oxford 1975), 143; Olson, *Aristophanes Peace* (n.7), 268-9 ad 1045-7.

responsible for sacrifices that promoted the subjugation of Euboea, he was himself a cleruch who settled in what was Hestiaea. As the scene plays out in Aristophanes' comedy, we see in Hierocles a man we are clearly meant to dislike. He sticks his expert nose in what is not his business, namely the sacrifice to the goddess Peace, for he evidently wants to subvert Trygaeus' plan in part because he does not want to lose his dining privileges in the Prytaneum.⁹⁸ Eupolis also mentioned Hierocles in a play of the same year, suggesting that he was widely known as a supporter of the Peloponnessian War.⁹⁹ Further, Hierocles' interest in the sacrifice is similarly self-interested—he wants the free food (e.g. 1050) and sheepskins (1124). It is tempting to connect this characterization to the events of 446/5; as a religious expert he helped to promote the settlement of Euboea in which he himself personally stood to profit as a colonist/cleruch. Olson even speculates that he may have himself spoken the oracles that required the sacrifices he himself later performed.¹⁰⁰ When Trygaeus corrects his slave at the beginning of the scene and declares that Hierocles is no *mantis* but rather a *chrēsmologos*, I think we are meant to understand precisely an unscrupulous diviner who functions in ways that further the state's interests, but who is in fact completely motivated by self-interest. How independent he was is difficult to tell, for being either a *mantis* or a chresmologue normally meant being a religious expert who did not have an official position; and yet, dinner in the Prytaneum may imply that he was involved in service to the state, most likely as an *exégētēs*.¹⁰¹ However we decide the issue, the passage from Aristophanes makes clear in no uncertain terms that *mantis* was a positive term, whereas *chrēsmologos* had distinct negative connotations. To be sure, negative shadings of *mantis* are found in tragedy, but that seems to be because that genre did not admit the term *chrēsmologos*.¹⁰²

It is highly significant that we see a similar figure connected to the foundation of Thurii in 444, one year after the Athenian settlement of Euboea. Indeed, in this case he is an oikist himself: Lampon (Kett

⁹⁸ Mattingly, "Athens, Delphi and Eleusis" (n.10), 186-7.

⁹⁹ Olson, *Aristophanes Peace* (n.7), 269 ad 1045-7. It is the Scholia to *Peace* 1046 that give us the Eupolis fragment (PCG F 231).

¹⁰⁰ Olson, *Aristophanes Peace* (n.7), 269 ad 1045-7.

¹⁰¹ Olson, *Aristophanes Peace* (n.7), 277 ad 1084-5, citing *IG* I³ 131.9-11.

¹⁰² Cf. J.D. Mikalson, *Honor Thy Gods. Popular Religion in Greek Tragedy* (Chapel Hill 1991), 92. Recall that in a vexed fragment of Sophocles Musaeus is called a chresmologue (above p. 179).

Prosopographie no. 46). Ancient testimonia say that Lampon was a *mantis* and personal friend of Pericles, and that he was sent out by him as one of the founders of Athens' "panhellenic" colony at Thurii, near the site of old Sybaris in S. Italy.¹⁰³ We do not know much about Lampon's activities in this venture, other than that, together with one Xenocritus, he acted as leader of the expedition,¹⁰⁴ though there may have been as many as ten oikists altogether. The scholia to Aristophanes *Clouds* 332 provide crucial detail. Explaining θουριομόνταις, the scholiast notes:

ten men were sent out [to Thurii], of whom also Lampon the *mantis* was one, whom they were calling an *exégētēs*. He was also one of those who were often involved in political affairs (ἦν δὲ καὶ τῶν πολιτευομένων πολλάκις). He was seeming continuously to bring forward arguments about the colonizing mission to Thurii (λόγους δὲ συνεχῶς εἰσάγειν ἐφαίνετο περὶ τῆς εἰς Θούριον ἀποικίας).

Here was a *mantis* who was well-known for being involved in politics, who was an ardent supporter of the colony at Thurii in particular, and who, it turns out, happened to be one of the leaders of the mission. Just as Hierocles the year before, Lampon was an advocate for a large state enterprise (colonization) that he stood to gain from personally as one of its chief officials. Is it any surprise, then, that he too is pilloried in comedy as a gluttonous chresmologue (Aristophanes *Birds* 332, 987-8, Cratinus F 66 *PCG*)? And there may be evidence that Thurii was not Lampon's only sponsorship of state policy that was of personal advantage to him. In a decree aimed at regulating the offering of first-fruits at Eleusis, probably from 422 (*IG* I³ 78 = ML 73), and mandated by "ancestral custom and the oracle of Delphi" (κατὰ τὰ πάτρια καὶ τὴν μαντείαν τὴν ἐγ Δελφῶν lines 4-5, 24-5, 34), we find him adding a rider that in effect made himself the sole drafter of a regulation regarding olive-oil (lines 59-61). To be sure this measure need not have opened the door to impropriety, but the fact that Lampon managed to "mak[e] himself a committee of one" excites speculation:¹⁰⁵ we know that huge amounts of grain were to

¹⁰³ Diod. 12.10.3-4, scholia to Aristophanes *Clouds* 332, Photius and Suda s.v. θουριομόνταις; cf. Plut. *Per.* 6.2.

¹⁰⁴ Note, though, that at Diod. 12.10.5, prospective colonists receive a cryptic oracle from Delphic Apollo regarding the location of the colony; precisely something requiring Lampon's expertise.

¹⁰⁵ P. A. Stadter, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Pericles* (Chapel Hill and London 1989), 83; cf. R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford 1972), 303-4.

be deposited at Eleusis, and that wheat and barley not needed by the cult were to be sold and the proceeds used for gilding the horns of victims and for votives (lines 37-44).¹⁰⁶ The same can be assumed for the olive-oil; in other words, a lot of cash was going to be changing hands.

Lampon was a very important man. Thucydides lists him as the first Athenian signer of the Peace of Nicias (Thuc. 5.19.2, 24.1), about a year after *IG I³ 78* (Spring 421). As with Hierocles, it is difficult to get a precise understanding of his official position at Athens. The scholiast notes that he was popularly known as an *exégētēs*, a detail supported by Eupolis (F 319 *PCG*). And yet the scholia to *Birds* 521 identify him as “sacrificer, chresmologue, and *mantis*.” The terminology is clearly somewhat fluid, as we have seen elsewhere. But it is important to know in what capacity Lampon acted as an officer of Athens. The scholia to *Clouds* 332 are crucial in this regard: Lampon was first a *mantis*, but he could also be called on occasion an *exégētēs*. I take this to mean that Lampon was always thought of as an independent diviner, but that there were times when he was employed by Athens in matters which required his expertise. When that was the case, he might take on other titles, such as *exégētēs*. In other words, the independent diviner was not always technically independent; but even when he was employed by the *polis*, he still managed to promote plans that coincided with his own interests, in particular plans of colonization. Indeed, there seems to have been an expectation that *manteis* and chresmologues would be involved in such plans, for the popular assumption that we see reflected in comedy is that these religious experts are in fact greedy and self-serving charlatans. Or, as Creon observes in a heated exchange with Teiresias from Sophocles’ *Antigone*, a play roughly contemporary with the colonization expeditions to Euboea and Thurii (dating to 442 or 441),¹⁰⁷ “the whole tribe of *manteis* is money-loving” (τὸ μαντικὸν γὰρ πᾶν φιλάργυρον γένος 1055; cf. Eur. *Ba.* 257). To this Teiresias responds, “and the race born from tyrants loves shameful gain:” the assumption that is operative here is that both classes of fully autonomous and independent agents—the tyrant and the *mantis*—will pursue their own self-interest.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. W. Burkert, “Athenian Cults and Festivals,” *CAH² V* (Cambridge 1992), 261.

¹⁰⁷ Play’s date: M. Griffith, *Sophocles Antigone* (Cambridge 1999), 1-2.

An intriguing counter example to Hierocles and Lampon is the Ambraciot *mantis* Silanus (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 62), found in Xenophon's *Anabasis*. When Xenophon contemplates founding a city on the coast of the Black Sea, he summons Silanus to help with the interpretation of a divinatory sacrifice (Xen. *An.* 5.6.16). As Malkin has shown, the passage implies that *manteis* were needed at precisely these points in a colonizing mission.¹⁰⁸ However, rather than endorse the plan, Silanus reveals Xenophon's intentions to the army of Greek mercenaries in order to scuttle it (*An.* 5.6.17).¹⁰⁹ But if Silanus' action is opposite to the colonizing efforts of Hierocles and Lampon, his ultimate purpose was the same: personal gain. As Xenophon tells us, Silanus wanted desperately to return to Greece quickly and in one piece, for he had in his possession three thousand darics, a gift from Cyrus the Younger (*An.* 5.6.18). This staggering amount was given to Silanus by Cyrus for a prophecy the prince took to promise success in his war with Artaxerxes II (*An.* 1.7.18), an episode that makes one think again of Onomacritus at the court of Xerxes years before: a Greek *mantis* gives a favorable prophecy to a Persian dynast at the start of a war he will lose. Another relevant case of later colonization that involved diviners is the foundation of Messene in 369. Pausanias relates the story that Epaminondas, the Theban general, knew of an oracle of Bacis that had prophesied the foundation of Messene, having found it in books written by a priestly family; having determined the site for the city, he consulted *manteis*, and when they reported that the sacrifices were favorable, he ordered the foundation stones to be laid (Paus. 4.27.4-5).

These examples of independent diviners and their often self-interested involvement in colonization prompts a further observation. By the mid-fifth century, in Athens at least, a new term is found to describe the seer: ἀγύρτης, a "begging-diviner."¹¹⁰ In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* of 458, Cassandra speaks of her torment as a *mantis* mocked by her own people, and then likens herself to "a wandering begging-seer"

¹⁰⁸ Malkin, *Religion and Colonization* (n.92), 102-4.

¹⁰⁹ Xenophon himself possesses knowledge of divination and so is able to keep an eye on the military *mantis*: *An.* 5.6.29.

¹¹⁰ Lexicographers treat the secondary meaning "beggar" as more prominent. Popular too: *agurtai* meaning "Galloi," priests of Cybele, e.g., Hesychius and the *Suda* s.v.

(φοιτὰς ὡς ἀγύρτρια 1273).¹¹¹ The diviner who seeks personal gain had become so familiar that a stereotype had emerged, and a new meaning given to a *nomen agentis* that dates back to Homer at least.¹¹² So, in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, we find Oedipus heap scorn upon the *mantis* Teiresias in the following way: "this crafty *agurtēs* who has sight only when it comes to profit, but in his art is blind" (δόλιον ἀγύρτην, ὅστις ἐν τοῖς κέρδεσιν ἰ μόνον δέδορκε τὴν τέχνην δ' ἔφν τυφλός 388-9, Lloyd-Jones trans.). Plato, later, is fully aware of ἀγύρτης as a technical term, and provides even more detail about its meaning when in the *Republic* he has Adeimantus observe:

Begging priests (ἀγύρται) and soothsayers (μάντιες) go to rich men's doors (ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες), and persuade them that they possess a power procured from the gods by means of sacrifices and incantations to cure in conjunction with pleasurable festivals (μεθ' ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἑορτῶν) any wrong of a man, either his own or his forbears... (*Resp.* 364b-c).

There can be no doubt about Plato's general point: the independent diviners of his day seem to specialize in solving the problems of the rich. Important to note is the manner in which the "cure" is effected: the phrase "with pleasurable festivals" (μεθ' ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἑορτῶν) does not indicate means or instrument, rather it refers to a "joint efficient cause"—that is, it is presumably at these banquets, "in conjunction with them," that the diviner performs his "healing" of the wealthy man.¹¹³ In other words, just as in comedy, the essential greed and self-interest of the independent religious expert is signaled by his gluttony. His knowledge is clearly fraudulent, for we learn later in the *Republic* that authentic wise men do not go banging on the doors of the wealthy (*Resp.* 489b-c).¹¹⁴ It is perhaps also significant that these very same *agurtai* cite pre-existing texts, namely Hesiod and Homer, to justify the need for their craft (*Resp.* 364d-e), a practice that recalls Onomacritus and his use of Musaeus. Note, though, that the attacks

¹¹¹ See Fraenkel, *Agamemnon* (n.16), vol. III, 590-1 ad loc.

¹¹² ἀγύρτης is not found before Aeschylus. However, the denominative ἀγυρτάζω occurs at *Od.* 19.284 (a *hapax*), where it has no pejorative sense: Chantraine, *Dictionnaire* (n.2), vol. I, 9 s.v. ἀγεῖρω. [Eur.] *Rh.* 503 and 715 may pick up the *Od.* passage.

¹¹³ Cf. Smyth no. 1691.1 and Schwyzler II 485. Cf. Thuc. 6.28.1: ἀγαλμάτων περικοπαὶ τινες πρότερον ὑπὸ νεωτέρων μετὰ παιδιᾶς καὶ οἴνου γεγενημένοι.

¹¹⁴ J. Adams, *The Republic of Plato* (Cambridge 1902), vol. I, 80-81, ad 364b suggests ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες was proverbial, citing *Resp.* 489b-c. Cf. Hp. *Morb.Sacr.* 1: similar figures attribute epilepsy to the divine.

on independent diviners, as well as the abusive terms for them, focus on the venality of the practitioner, not on the notion of prophecy itself. The Greeks were quite aware that a prophecy could be tailor-made to fit a situation, and specifically the interests of the diviner, as many scenes in Aristophanes amply demonstrate. But the fault lay with the diviner, and did not bear on the legitimacy of prophecy.¹¹⁵

Judging by the hostility towards independent diviners in comedy, tragedy and Plato, and in particular in the term *agurtēs*, we would not be able to guess the enormous importance and honor they enjoyed because of their exploits on the field of battle.¹¹⁶ We caught a glimpse of this aspect of the *mantis*/chresmologue with the prophecy of Amphilytus before the battle of Pellene, for he was evidently there; recall, too, the Iamids Callias in the war between Sybaris and Croton, and Teisamenus later at Plataea. In a few remarkable cases, independent diviners, specifically *manteis*, are not only present in battle, they play important military roles, either leading an attack or devising special tactics for combat or escape (Hdt. 6.83.2, 8.27.3; Thuc. 3.20.1).¹¹⁷ Aeschylus even produced the *hapax legomenon* στρατόμαντις (“army-seer” Ag. 122), and Herodotus speaks of Deiphonus as *mantis* to the Greek *stratiē* at Mycale (Hdt. 9.95, Kett *Prosopographie* no. 18). But mostly what we will see are diviners, chiefly *manteis*, who give the divine sanction for combat after inspecting sacrifice (*ta hiera*, *ta sphagia*: see e.g. Thuc. 6.69.2, Xen. *An.* 1.8.15),¹¹⁸ and who are not infrequently the

¹¹⁵ Lloyd, *The Ambitions of Curiosity* (n.17), 36. Also H. Klees, *Die Eigenart des griechischen Glaubens an Orakel und Seher*, Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 43 (Stuttgart 1965); Nock, “Religious Attitudes” (n.15), 539; D. Lateiner, “The Perception of Deception and Gullibility in Specialists of the Supernatural (Primarily) in Athenian Literature,” in R.M. Rosen and J. Farrell, eds. *Nomodeiktes: Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald* (Ann Arbor 1993), 179-95; T. Harrison, *Divinity and history: The religion of Herodotus* (Oxford 2000), 142.

¹¹⁶ Pritchett, “The Military *Mantikē*” (n.62), 47-90. Cf., e.g., S. Eitrem, “Mantis und ΣΦΑΓΙΑ,” *SO* 18 (1938): 9-30; M. Jameson, “Sacrifice before Battle,” in V.D. Hanson, ed., *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience* (London and New York 1991), 197-228; F.T. van Straten, *Hiera Kala* (Leiden, New York, Köln 1995), 156-7.

¹¹⁷ The first case: Cleander of Phigalea in Arcadia (Kett *Prosopographie*, no. 42), who seems to lead a slave revolt at Tiryns. The second: Tellias of Elis (Kett *Prosopographie*, no. 67), who comes up with an ingenious plan for a night assault for the Phocians in their war with the Thessalians. The third: Theaenetus (Kett *Prosopographie*, no. 31), who proposes the escape of the Plataeans in 428/7. He is paired with a general (Eupompides): again the seer and military leader together.

¹¹⁸ See n. 115 above. In the Thuc. passage the sacrifices and subsequent start of hoplite combat come *after* missile and light armed attacks, suggesting this sort of fighting was not a sanctioned part of battle.

formal initiators of conflict themselves. But rarely they could also be involved in the resolution of conflict and the maintenance of peaceful relations. So, recall that in legend Epimenides brokered a peace between Knossos and Athens. There is documentary evidence from the historical period that suggests this function as well. An inscription of c.550 from Olympia makes clear that *manteis* were overseers of a treaty between the Anaitoi and Metapioi (*Inscr. Olymp.* no.10 = Bengtson *Staatsverträge des Altertums* II² no.111, *SEG* 11.183), and a Spartan treaty (end 5th, start 4th?) with the Aetolians, or specifically a subgroup of them named the Erxadieis, seems also to have involved the activity of a *mantis*.¹¹⁹

Perhaps the most eloquent and yet briefest evidence we have for diviners in combat are two casualty-lists on stone from the classical period mentioning *manteis* as war dead. In the record of war dead from the Erechtheid tribe for 460 or 459 from Athens (*IG* I³ 1147 = *ML* 33), we find at the end of the second column: ἐν Αἰγύπτοι | vacat | Τελένικος | μάντις (lines 128-9; Kett *Prosopographie* no. 66). Similar is *SEG* 29.361, an Argive casualty-list from c.400. The third line reads: [...c.5..] μάντις. In both cases the men in question are one of a small group of individuals who are identified by office. So, in *IG* I³ 1147 we also have two *stratégoi* and four citizen archers mentioned in places of prominence (beginning and end of columns) out of a total of 177 men; and in *SEG* 29.361 we find a *probasileus*, a *stratagos*, and a *iareus*, all at the beginning of the text with the *mantis*. The vast majority of men on both lists are identified simply by name and group affiliation (tribe in the Athenian case, phratry in the Argive).

In addition to these casualty-lists, there are two inscribed texts of a different sort from Attica that also refer to *manteis* in combat, specifically naval fighting in the Corinthian War. In 1957 J. Papademetriou

¹¹⁹ W. Peek, "Ein neuer spartanischer Staatsvertrag," *Abhand. Säch. Akad. der Wissen., Phil.-hist. Klasse* 65.3 (Leipzig 1974), 3-15; conveniently found in P.A. Cartledge, "A new 5th-century Spartan treaty," *LCM* 1 (1976): 87-92. Cartledge dates to c.425; D.H. Kelly, "The new Spartan treaty," *LCM* 3 (1978): 133-41, to 388. Line four:]νμονος μαν[τι.... A dating formula seems required; thus Cartledge translates "when ...]nmon was se[er." But while dating by priest is common (see, e.g., P. Stengel, *Die griechischen Kultusaltertümer* [Munich 1920], 39 and n.7, A. Chaniotis, *Historie und Historiker in den griechischen Inschriften* [Stuttgart 1988], 186-93), dating by *mantis* is not. Note the related phenomenon of the storage of treaties in sanctuaries: H. Bengtson, "Zwischenstaatliche Beziehungen der griechischen Städte im klassischen Zeitalter," in his *Kleine Schriften* (Munich 1974), 215.

published a set of two inscriptions from a tombstone found at Menidi (*SEG* 16.193).¹²⁰ Above a relief showing an eagle clasping a serpent in its talons is the legend Κλειόβολος Ἀχα[ρνενὸς] μάντις. The title and image work together, for the relief depicts the sort of omen a *mantis* was expected to interpret (indeed the quintessential one—an eagle clutching a serpent: Homer *Il.* 12.200-7). Below the image is the following epigram:

Γλαύκο παῖ Κλεόβουλε θανόντα σε γαῖα κα[λύπτει]
 ἀμφοτέρων μάντιν τε ἀγαθὸν καὶ δορὶ μ[άχεσθαι]
 ὃν ποτ' Ἐρεχθέως μεγαλήτορος εἶπεν ἀ[ληθῶς]
 δῆμος ἀριστεύσαντα καθ' Ἑλλάδα [κύδος ἀρέσθαι]

Son of Glaucus, Cleobulus, having died the earth conceals you,
 both *mantis* and one good at fighting with the spear,
 whom once the people of proud Erechtheus declared rightly
 had won glory throughout Greece, having shown your valor.¹²¹

This Cleobulus was none other than the maternal uncle of Aeschines the orator (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 43). In interpreting the text, Papademetriou drew on a passage from Aeschines' *On the False Embassy* (from 343). Defending his family from the attacks of Demosthenes, Aeschines mentions his father's opposition to the Thirty Tyrants, and then goes on to say, "...our mother's brother, our uncle Cleobulus, the son of Glaucus of the deme Acharnae, was with Demaenetus of the family Buzygae, when he won the naval victory over Chilon the Lacedaemonian admiral" (Aesch. 2.78, Adams trans.). Relying on the sequence of Spartan nauarchs, Papademetriou argued that this battle must have occurred in the summer of 387, during the last phase of the Corinthian War.¹²² But it is difficult to reconcile this conflict with our historical narratives (e.g. Xenophon *Hell.* 5.1.10-13). Harris has more recently made the case that the battle in question is the one found at *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 9-11 (Chambers), involving the defeat not of Chilon, but Milon, in 397/6.¹²³ At whichever engagement Cleobulus

¹²⁰ "Ὁ Θεῖος τοῦ Αἰσχίνου Κλεοβούλος ὁ Μάντις," *Platon* 9 (1957): 154-62.

¹²¹ This is the text Papademetriou prints. G. Daux, "Notes de lecture," *BCH* 82 (1958): 364-66 has several reservations. See also Pritchett, "The Military *Mantikê*" (n.62), 57.

¹²² Papademetriou, "Κλεοβούλος ὁ Μάντις" (n.120), 161; J. & L. Robert, *BE* 1958 no.217, agree.

¹²³ E.M. Harris, *Aeschines and Athenian Politics* (New York and Oxford 1995), 23-4.

was present, the tone of the epigram is clear: he was a warrior-*mantis* very much in the mold of the heroic Amphiaraus and his kindred. Indeed, Papademetriou compared the second line of the epigram to Pindar *O.* 6.17 where Adrastus laments the loss of his comrade Amphiaraus: ἀμφότερον μάντιν τ' ἀγαθὸν καὶ δουρὶ μάρνασθαι, "both a *mantis* and one good at fighting with the spear."¹²⁴ Clearly we have here a view of the independent diviner that is at odds with the stage-version, a point confirmed in the negative by Demosthenes. Although Aeschines' mother and father come in for stinging abuse in Demosthenes' own *On the False Embassy* (281) and *De Corona* (129-30), in language similar to what we see on the comic stage, Cleobulus is absent, as though such a figure could not be so attacked.¹²⁵

The other Corinthian war era text is similar to Cleobulus' tombstone. A *stele* preserves two enactments by the Athenian government, one a decree of the Boule and the other a decree of the Ecclesia, granting one Sthorys of Thasos (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 61) both Athenian citizenship and the right to eat in the Prytaneum (*IG* II² 17 + *SEG* 15.84 + *SEG* 16.42 = Osborne *Naturalization* no. D8).¹²⁶ The texts date to 394/3, and seem to suggest that Sthorys won these privileges for serving as a *mantis* at a major naval battle (see esp. lines 26-8: τὰ γενόμενα περὶ τῆς ἰ ναυμαχίας [μαντευσάμενος ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν τῶν εἰσι-ιτηρηρίων). Osborne argued that the engagement can be none other than Cnidus, at which the Athenian admiral Conon soundly defeated the Spartan forces under Peisander. Sthorys was in all likelihood attached to Conon's staff, and by the time of the grant of citizenship was actually receiving an official salary.¹²⁷ Significantly, Xenophon reports that an eclipse of the sun took place at the same time as the battle (*Hell.* 4.3.10: Aug. 14, 394), something the historian took as a divine sign of the Spartan disaster,¹²⁸ and which Sthorys would no doubt have made much of too, but naturally from an Athenian perspective. Indeed, one almost has to say that the eclipse was among the very omens he interpreted. Of course, we have no way of

¹²⁴ Papademetriou, "Κλεοβουλος ὁ Μαντις," (n.120) 160.

¹²⁵ Cf. Papademetriou, "Κλεοβουλος ὁ Μαντις," (n.120) 161; and the Roberts (n.122).

¹²⁶ M.J. Osborne, *Naturalization in Athens* (Brussel 1981-82), vol. I, 44-45.

¹²⁷ Osborne, *Naturalization in Athens* (n.126), vol. II, 46-47.

¹²⁸ Cf. G. Cawkwell, *Xenophon A History of My Times*, R. Warner trans. (Harmondsworth 1979), note on 203.

knowing if Sthorys was made the butt of jokes in Attic comedy in the same fashion we see Hierocles and Lampon were for the same privilege of dining in the Prytaneum. I would note that unlike them, but like other diviners we have already seen going back to the legendary period, Sthorys is an outsider, a non-Athenian who gains the coveted privilege of Athenian citizenship.

Xenophon also reports the death in battle of a *mantis* roughly contemporary with both Sthorys and Cleobulus, namely the anonymous seer serving with Thrasybulus and the democrats from Phyle at the battle of Munychia (late winter, 403). Xenophon goes out of his way to inform us that the *mantis* fell in the front of the battle lines, charging the enemy, and that he lies buried at the ford of the Cephissus river. What is more, the same *mantis* had prophesied victory for the democrats if they held off their attack until one of their own number had been killed or wounded, a prophecy he himself fulfilled in an almost sacrificial manner (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.18-19). Of course the diviner who knowingly goes to his death is very familiar, beginning with the mythical Amphiaraus (note also Idmon, A.R. 1.140, 443).

It was noted some time ago that the manner in which Xenophon speaks of the *mantis* at Munychia, namely as “the seer” (with the definite article), implies that they were regular members of Greek armies.¹²⁹ Indeed, if we look back at the Persian Wars, our literary sources offer an abundance of evidence, some of which I have already mentioned. What is more, the battle of Thermopylae in particular provides a parallel to the anonymous *mantis* of Munychia. Herodotus tells us that the Greek forces at Thermopylae had early warning of their immanent destruction from the reports of lookouts and enemy deserters, but most notably because of Megistias, an Acarnanian *mantis* and descendant of Melampus (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 50), who “having looked upon the sacrifice declared the death that awaited them together with the dawn” (Hdt. 7.219.1). Herodotus then tells us that the oracle at Delphi had informed the Spartans at the outset of the war that either their city must be destroyed by the invading Persians, or one of their kings must fall in battle (7.220.3). Finally, he reports a controversy concerning the departure of almost all the non-Spartan

¹²⁹ E.g. B. Büchschütz, *Xenophons griechische Geschichte* (Leipzig 1891), vol. I, 98 ad loc.; G.E. Underhill, *A Commentary on the Hellenica of Xenophon* (Oxford 1900), 70 ad loc.

Greek forces before the battle in the pass: some say they deserted, but Herodotus supports the view that king Leonidas ordered them to go. His proof is Megistias, for when he was ordered to leave Thermopylae, he chose not to, preferring instead to send away his son (7.221). Herodotus also records the diviner's epitaph in his treatment of the honored dead of the battle:

μνήμα τόδε κλεινοῖο Μεγιστία, ὃν ποτε Μῆδοι
 Σπερχειὸν ποταμὸν κτεῖναν ἀμειψάμενοι,
 μάντιος, ὃς τότε Κῆρας ἐπερχομένας σάφα εἰδὼς
 οὐκ ἔτλη Σπάρτης ἡγεμόνας προλιπεῖν.
 ...τὸ δὲ [ἐπιγράμμα] τοῦ μάντιος Μεγιστίῳ Σιμωνίδης ὁ
 Λεωπρέπεός ἐστι κατὰ ξεινίην ὁ ἐπιγράψας (7.228-3-4 = Peek *GVI*
 no. 94)

This is the memorial of renowned Megistias, whom the Medes
 slew, having first crossed the Spercheius,
 the *mantis*, who though he saw clearly Death coming then,
 did not dare abandon the lords of Sparta.
 Simonides the son of Leoprepes is the one who wrote the epigram of
 Megistias on account of their friendship.

The parallels with the story of the seer of Munychia are striking. Both episodes feature a *mantis* who foretells his own death but does not flee. Both also feature an alternative, scapegoat prophecy: victory will ultimately come to the communities involved (the democrats of Athens; Sparta) if a representative from each (the anonymous seer; Leonidas) dies in battle.¹³⁰ It is interesting to note, too, that only Leonidas and Megistias are named in memorial epitaphs of the battle, both by Simonides,¹³¹ even though Herodotus knows the names of other men who distinguished themselves there (Hdt. 7.226-7). In this regard the Thermopylae texts are similar to the casualty lists in privileging leaders and seers. While Megistias was, like so many other diviners we have met, an outsider, he is put on the same level as Leonidas, one of the most famous kings of Sparta. Herodotus tells us specifically that they both knew in advance the outcome of the battle (Hdt. 7.219.1 Megistias, 220.4 Leonidas); hence both their deaths are self-sacrificial, and both receive a poem remembering them by Simonides. The pairing of leader and seer that we saw as far

¹³⁰ Cf. J. Dillery, "Reconfiguring the Past: Thyrea, Thermopylae and Narrative Patterns in Herodotus," *AJP* 117 (1996): 229, 240-41.

¹³¹ For Leonidas, see *PMG* 531 = Diod. 11.11.6.

back as Hector and Polydamas is also operative here. It is certainly found in other comparable, historical figures: the equally heroic and doomed Nicias and his seer Stilbides for instance (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 63; Plut. *Nic.* 23.7; cf. Thuc. 7.50.4). Furthermore, the friendship of Megistias with Simonides reminds us of the essential closeness of the two *technai*—*mantikê* and poetry—something we see already in the *Odyssey* and which is common in the archaic period (the lists that include both as areas of expertise).¹³²

There is a very good reason for the heroic overtones. As the recently published Plataea Elegy of Simonides has shown with unmistakable clarity, the Persian Wars were represented in the literature of the fifth century in ways meant to recall the world of epic.¹³³ Indeed, in West's reconstruction of both F 11 and F 14 of Simonides' poem, the *mantis* Teisamenus plays a major role: his expertise is first identified as being crucial to the eventual victory at Plataea, and his decisive pre-battle prophecy is recorded at some length.¹³⁴ In this reconstruction, Teisamenus was very likely cast as a heroic seer. It needs to be said, however, that West's interpretation of F 11 and F 14 is not universally accepted.¹³⁵ Our most complete extant description of the battle is still Herodotus' narrative, and it is not at all ambiguous about Teisamenus' role. If we look at him there, as well as his opposite number, Hegesistratus (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 30), serving on the Persian side in the same engagement, a similar, but also subtly different view of the *mantis* emerges from that which may be found in the poem by Simonides.

According to Herodotus, just prior to the battle of Plataea, both the Greek and Persian armies offered sacrifices. He continues:

For the Greeks, the one sacrificing was Teisamenus, the son of Antiochus. For he was the man who was serving on this expedition as *mantis*. This man, though Elean by birth and of the clan of the Iamidæ [a

¹³² For more on the connection between poetry and prophecy, see Struck in this volume, 147-65.

¹³³ See esp. D. Boedeker and D. Sider, eds., *The New Simonides: Contexts of Praise and Desire* (New York 2001).

¹³⁴ F 11.42 West²: Ἰαμίδεω τέχναίς μάν]τιος ἀντιθέου[. F 14, which West identifies as Teisamenus' prophecy, preserving 17 lines of text.

¹³⁵ I. Rutherford, "The New Simonides. Toward a Commentary," in Boedeker and Sider, eds., *The New Simonides* (n.133), 48 suggests that F 14 is spoken by a divine figure. Note also that Parsons and others read "Cecrops" at line 42 of F 11, not "*mantis*." On these matters see now M.A. Flower and J. Marincola, *Herodotus Histories Book IX* (Cambridge 2002), 317-18.

Clytiad],¹³⁶ the Spartans made into one of their own citizens (ἐποιήσαντο λεωσφότερον Hdt. 9.33.1).

For Herodotus the most remarkable fact about Teisamenus was that he won the privilege of full Spartiate status, something that was completely without parallel before or since (9.35.1). This odd fact is explained in an elaborate *logos*. Childless, Teisamenus went to Delphi to inquire about the matter, but was told by the *Pythia* that he was destined to win five contests. Misinterpreting this to mean athletic contests, he started to train and nearly won the pentathlon at Olympia.¹³⁷ The Spartans knew better. They understood “contests” to mean “battles,” and “tried, by offering him a wage, to make Teisamenus a leader in war, together with the Heraclid kings” (μισθῷ ἐπειρῶντο πείσαντες Τεισαμενὸν ποιέεσθαι ἅμα Ἡρακλειδέων τοῖσι βασιλεῦσι ἡγεμόνα τῶν πολέμων 9.33.3). Another extraordinary fact: before the grant of citizenship, Teisamenus was offered a joint-command with the kings of Sparta! Although some doubt the offer,¹³⁸ the implication is clear: Teisamenus is to be put on the same level with the kings, a phenomenon we have seen elsewhere. The seer, alert to the Spartans’ urgency, raised his price: he demanded full citizen rights. The Spartans at first refused, but when they saw the threat of Persia looming, they conceded. But then Teisamenus raised his price higher still: he demanded citizenship for his brother, Hagias, as well as for himself. Herodotus tells us that Teisamenus was here “imitating Melampus” (ἐμιμέετο Μελάμποδα 9.34.1), who had similarly won for himself half the kingdom of Argos, and one-third for his brother Bias (see above). The Spartans agreed to both of Teisamenus’ demands, and with him as diviner, they won the battles of Plataea, Tegea, Dipaeas, Ithome and Tanagra (9.35.2). At Plataea he determined that victory would belong to the Greeks if they did not cross the Asopus river and attack the Persians first, but rather received the initial assault (9.36).

Herodotus states that the Persian commander, Mardonius, also made

¹³⁶ The reading of the MSS is τὸν ἔόντα Ἡλείον καὶ γένεος τοῦ Ἰαμιδέων Κλυτιάδην (-δου S). Valckenaer deleted Κλυτιάδην, followed by Hude, who brackets. See also Flower and Marincola, *Herodotus Book IX* (n.135), 166 ad loc.

¹³⁷ Flower and Marincola, *Herodotus Book IX* (n.135), 320-22, discuss *IG VII* 1670, which may be a dedication by Teisamenus celebrating an athletic victory. See also Paus. 3.11.6-7. Also consult A. Schachter, “The Seer Tisamenos and the Klytiadai,” *CQ* 50 (2000): 292-95.

¹³⁸ Cf. How and Wells, *Commentary on Herodotus* (n.72), vol. II, 302 ad 9.33.3.

use of Greek rites before Plataea, and that his diviner was Hegesistratus of Elis, of the clan Telliadae (9.37.1). We learn that he was earlier caught by the Spartans and condemned to death on the grounds that “they had suffered many injuries (πολλά τε καὶ ἀνάρσια) at his hand.” Hegesistratus effected his escape by cutting off part of his foot, which he later lost completely, and fleeing to Tegea. When he had healed and gotten himself a wooden foot, “he made himself openly hostile to the Spartans” (κατεστήκεε ἐκ τῆς ἰθέης Λακεδαιμονίοισι πολέμιος 9.37.4). Thus, though handsomely paid by the Persians, he was at Plataea as a *mantis* “both because of his hatred of the Spartans and because of the money” (κατὰ τε τὸ ἔχθος τὸ Λακεδαιμονίων καὶ κατὰ τὸ κέρδος 9.38.1). His enmity for the Spartans ultimately resulted in his death, for he was caught by them later on Zacynthus while acting as a *mantis* (μαντευόμενος 9.37.4) and was executed.

These brief biographies of Teisamenus and Hegesistratus are clearly meant to be read together: they are linked by μέν and δέ (9.33.1, 37.1). But even more than the formal connection, they are united by a common theme: the independent diviner who advances his private interests while serving a non-native power. Of course Teisamenus does become a Spartan, and so is in a sense helping his own state, but that does not alter the fact that he was working for a *misthos*—a payment—at least initially from a foreign *polis*. Both Teisamenus and Hegesistratus seem to have more in common with the Athenian Hierocles and Lampon than with Megistias, the *mantis* of Munychia, or the warrior-seers found on casualty lists. Yet Herodotus’ characterization is not uniformly negative in either case. A connection to the heroic past is explicit in the stories of both men, for Teisamenus imitates Melampus, and Hegesistratus’ self-mutilation is described in the language of heroic accomplishment (it was “the most manly deed of all that we know:” ἀνδρητότατον ἔργον πάντων τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν 9.37.2). They both seem more like Sthorys later, and Teisamenus especially so (both receive grants of citizenship). All three seers work for wages and are rewarded, and yet all three are also combat-*manteis* who accomplish deeds worthy of record. They seem to be intermediary between the heroic warrior-seer and the unscrupulous chresmologue of the Attic stage. The essential fact about this group is that they demonstrate how a tension exists between the *polis*-framework and the individual specialist from outside. Indeed, the activity of the independent diviner in the period of the Persian Wars, a high-watermark for the *polis*, seems to be a fossil of an earlier era when authority was attached to individuals and their

families, and not institutions or offices of state.¹³⁹ Teisamenus makes himself a peer with the kings of Sparta, and Hegesistratus declares a personal war upon the same *polis*, as though a state himself. The seer contests with the *polis* for supreme authority.¹⁴⁰ It is a situation not that different from the one imagined by G. Herman in relation to Greeks and inter-state diplomacy: in the spaces created by the world of the *polis*, the elite individual still finds a way to function autonomously, independent from, but still connected to his community.¹⁴¹ It also bears noting that this same individual's own motivations are complex: Teisamenus wants to join the community he negotiates with, and his services are to be performed for a wage. The issue of *misthos* seems always close to the surface in the case of chresmologues, but here too it is prominent. There is a clear tension between Teisamenus seeking entry into elite status (the Spartiate class), and working for this end as a wage.¹⁴² The story of Evenius of Apollonia (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 26) is the inverse of Teisamenus: he is deprived of proper compensation through trickery, but Herodotus makes clear that the price for settling his claim against his native city could have been substantially more than it turned out to be (Hdt. 9.93-94). He too wields unparalleled authority, after a fashion.

At each of the major battles of the Persian Wars of 480-79 in mainland Greece, independent diviners are found and play important roles. We have already met Megistias at Thermopylae, and Teisamenus and Hegesistratus at Plataea; and in fact there was at least one other at that battle, Hippomachus of Leucas (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 40), who served with the Greeks allied to the Persians (Hdt. 9.38.2). Remember, too, Deiphonus at Mycale. At Salamis, divination not only played a part, one could say that it is central to Herodotus' understanding of the entire engagement. Chresmologues are involved in the dispute over the interpretation of the famous "wooden wall" prophecy delivered at Delphi some time before the battle, and the oracles of Bacis, Musaeus, and a named chresmologue are confirmed in the discussion

¹³⁹ Davies, "Greece after the Persian Wars" (n.63), 30-1.

¹⁴⁰ J.-P. Vernant, "Parole et signes muets," in Vernant et. al., *Divination et Rationalité* (Paris 1974), 14.

¹⁴¹ G. Herman, *Ritualised friendship and the Greek city* (Cambridge 1987).

¹⁴² The problem of wage-earning and *banausia*: cf. P. Brunt, "Aspects of the social thought of Dio Chrysostom and the Stoics," *PCPS* 19 (1973): 10-11 (= *Studies in Greek History and Thought* [Oxford 1993], 212-13).

of its aftermath. And one can argue that Themistocles plays the role of a diviner in much the same way that we saw the Pisistratid Hippias earlier. The events of Salamis call for special attention.¹⁴³

As part of his defense of the view that Athens was the chief reason for the successful repulse of Xerxes' invasion and thus the salvation of Greece (Hdt. 7.139), Herodotus notes that not even the direst of warnings from Delphi deterred the Athenians from resisting the invader. Those dire warnings were two oracular responses given to an Athenian delegation sent to Delphi at some indeterminate point shortly before the war.¹⁴⁴ The first was a twelve-line hexameter oracle delivered by the *Pythia* telling the Athenians to flee their city for it was to be destroyed by the Persians (7.140.2-3). When the Athenians made ready to leave the sanctuary, devastated by the prediction of utter ruin for their *polis*, one Timon of Delphi suggested that they approach the oracle a second time and ask for another prophecy. This they did, and the priestess responded with a second twelve-line hexameter oracle (7.141.3-4). This prophecy the envoys wrote down, and then went back to Athens (συγγραψάμενοι ἀπαλλάσσοντο ἐς τὰς Ἀθήνας 7.142.1), where a controversy arose over its interpretation. Reference to a "wooden wall" (τεῖχος...ξύλινον line 6) that would not fail led some older citizens to argue that, inasmuch as the citadel of Athens was once protected by a thorn-hedge, the acropolis was what the oracle meant, and hence it was to serve as the Athenians' refuge and should be defended. Another group argued that "wooden wall" meant Athens' fleet. But they were stumped by another phrase in the oracle, "divine Salamis," a place that would bring death to "women's sons" (line 11). A group of χρησμολόγοι, none named, interpreted this to mean that the Athenians would be defeated at Salamis (7.142.3). At this point Herodotus mentions Themistocles for the first time in his *History*: "there was a certain man among the Athenians who had recently come to prominence, whose name was Themistocles, called the son of Neocles" (7.143.1). He provided the decisive further clarification, in opposition to the chresmologues, that if the reference to

¹⁴³ For more on the wooden wall, see Johnston in this volume, 298.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. J.A.S. Evans, "The Oracle of the 'Wooden Wall,'" *CJ* 78 (1982): 24-29; P.B. Georges, "Saving Herodotus' Phenomena: The Oracles and the Events of 480 BC," *ClAnt* 5 (1986): 14-59; A.J. Holladay, "The Forethought of Themistocles," *JHS* 107 (1987): 182-87; N. Robertson, "The True Meaning of the 'Wooden Wall,'" *CP* 82 (1987): 1-20.

Salamis meant Athens' defeat, "divine" would not be appropriate, rather "cruel" (ὦ σχετλίη for ὦ θεΐη 7.143.1).¹⁴⁵ Later we hear of Themistocles' advocacy of earmarking the Laurium profits for funding the construction of 200 warships, reported in a retrospective digression *after* his advice regarding the "wooden wall" oracle, even though it must have occurred earlier (7.144).

In the immediate context of the battle of Salamis, Herodotus reports that an oracle of Bacis predicted dire consequences for Euboea from the Persian invasion, indeed in such unambiguous terms that he essentially faults the Euboeans for not heeding it (Hdt. 8.20; cf. 8.77). Following the battle, when describing the wreckage washing up on the Colias promontory near Halimous, Herodotus states again that a prophecy of Bacis was fulfilled by the outcome, but adds that Musaeus had also predicted the victory, as well as "an Athenian chresmologue named Lysistratus" (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 48), who years before had uttered a prophecy that all the Greeks had forgotten: "the Colian women shall roast their food with oars" (Hdt. 8.96.2).

In this array of information regarding Salamis, spread through a large portion of narrative, certain themes emerge that connect with many familiar concepts: the heroic diviner, the ambiguous chresmologue, the problem of oracles and writing, Herodotus' own controversial views. The heroic seer is of course Themistocles. His entry into Herodotus' text is clearly marked; the story-teller introduction (ἦν δὲ τῶν τις "there was a certain man...") serves not to diminish him, but rather to draw notice.¹⁴⁶ Secondly, although he is not identified as such, he gives an exegesis of the second prophecy that an expert normally performed. This understanding of Themistocles as a diviner is not unique to Herodotus, but seems part of a historiographic tradition, implying that it was fairly widespread. Thucydides, in a summation of his character, calls him "the best conjecturer of what was to happen even in the remote future" (τῶν μελλόντων ἐπὶ πλείστον τοῦ γενησομένου ἄριστος εἰκαστής), and mentions specifically his ability to foresee the

¹⁴⁵ In Homer σχετλιος, -η, -ον is almost always first in a line (e.g. *Il.* 2.112, 16.203, 24.33), but not second, as here (though note *Il.* 3.414).

¹⁴⁶ C. Fornara, *Herodotus: An Interpretative Essay* (Oxford 1971), 68, citing Xen. *An.* 3.1.4: ἦν δὲ τις ἐν τῇ στρατίᾳ Ξενοφῶν Ἀθηναῖος. Note also *Hell.* 4.1.29, 5.4.2 and 25. For a parallel from Hdt., 3.4.1. Cf. A. Bloch, "Über die Entwicklung der Ausdrucksfähigkeit in den Sprachen des Altertums," *MH* 1 (1944): 245-48. Common in folktale: W. Aly, "Märchen," *RE* 27 (1928), 258.

good and bad in the unseen (Thuc. 1.138.3). To a degree this characterization of Themistocles is simply due to him being a far-sighted statesman, much like Pericles. But there is probably something more as well. Parker pairs Thucydides' first observation in particular with a fragment of Euripides stating "the best *mantis* is he who guesses well" (μάντις δ' ἄριστος ὅστις εἰκάζει καλῶς F 973 Nauck), implying that the passage in Thucydides is meant to suggest Themistocles' mantic qualities.¹⁴⁷ Plutarch, for his part, reports a number of divinatory acts by him in his *Life*. Indeed, in his own narrative of Themistocles' advocacy of a navy for Athens, Plutarch notes that he won the Athenians over not with reason but with the use of "divine signs and oracles" (σημεῖα δαιμόνια καὶ χρησμούς Plut. *Them.* 10.1); his interpretation of the controversial line regarding Salamis from the second oracle is discussed in this context (10.3). We should remember, too, that as a *mantis*-figure in Herodotus' narrative, Themistocles stands opposed both to the elders of Athens and to "the chresmologues." What is more, he is an outsider, for Herodotus alludes to his low estate as a possible bastard ("called the son of Neocles"). Of course, his later career, and in particular his Medism, will make Themistocles seem, if anything, more like a chresmologue than a *mantis*,¹⁴⁸ but in the story of Salamis he plays the role of the clairvoyant religious expert who can see what other experts and authorities cannot. The controversy surrounding the interpretation of "divine Salamis" takes on the look of a competition, along the lines of what we see with Onomacritus and Lasus, Trygaeus and Hierocles, or perhaps even Calchas and Mopsus.

The chresmologues in the story of the "wooden wall" oracle pose several acute difficulties. It is unusual for a diviner not to be named in Herodotus and other historians, though it is not without parallel (the *mantis* of Munychia). Secondly, we have not yet seen a case where religious experts of any sort act as a group, expressing their views as a collectivity. And finally, inasmuch as they seem to be acting as a kind of board of oracular interpreters, it is difficult not to see them

¹⁴⁷ R. Parker, "Greek States and Greek Oracles," in P. Cartledge and F.D. Harvey, eds., *CRUX. Essays presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix on his 75th Birthday* (London 1985), 323-4 and n.88, citing Vernant, "Parole et signes muets" (n.140), 14. Cf. S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford 1991), vol. I, 223, ad loc.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. W. Blösel, "The Herodotean Picture of Themistocles: A Mirror of Fifth-century Athens," in N. Luraghi, ed., *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus* (Oxford 2001), 179-97.

as state officials of some kind, that is, as dependent, not independent diviners. Oliver's solution to this puzzle was simply to assume that the chresmologues of the story were in fact a quasi-official board, and as such were precursors to the *exégētai* of Athens.¹⁴⁹ But serious objections were raised regarding the details of his argument (see above n.10). It seems to me that two types of evidence help to solve the problem of the group of anonymous chresmologues in Herodotus' account.

First, groups of anonymous chresmologues, and indeed other diviners, are also found in Thucydides, similarly clustered around the start of war or other catastrophic events. At 2.8.2 Thucydides refers with barely veiled scorn to chresmologues chanting their prophesies throughout the Greek world on the eve of the conflict. At 2.17.1 he makes reference to a Delphic oracle regarding a prohibition on building in the Pelasgian Field (*to Pelargikon*; cf. Lampon and *IG I³* 78.54-7), whose relevance Thucydides seems to reject, but no doubt in response to a more popular view. And at 2.21.3 he tells us that amid the panic caused at Athens by the first Spartan invasion of Attica in the summer of 431, "chresmologues were chanting oracles of various sorts, which [the Athenians] were each inclined to listen to" (χρησμολόγοι τε ἦδον χρησμούς παντοίους, ὧν ἀκροᾶσθαι ὡς ἕκαστος ὥρμητο).¹⁵⁰ Although Herodotus' narrative speaks of οἱ χρησμολόγοι, as though a specific group, I believe that Gomme was right to see a fundamental similarity between the chresmologues of 480 and those of 431:¹⁵¹ the coming of war brings into the open, and perhaps even into one place, those whose business it is to make predictions. Thucydides' text makes the point even clearer with the addition that different people sought different chresmologues, depending on their own inclinations. This must mean that there was hardly an official board of chresmologues who spoke with one voice. Recall, too, the possibility suggested by the scenes of competitive oracular citation in Aristophanes that there may have been contests of chresmologues. Similar oracular disputes arose at the time of the plague in Athens (Thuc. 2.54.2-5), and may also have after the mutilation of the herms (cf. Thuc. 6.27.3).¹⁵² It

¹⁴⁹ Oliver, *Athenian Expounders* (n.6), esp. 8.

¹⁵⁰ See A.G. Laird, "ὡς ἕκαστος in Thucydides," *AJP* 27 (1906): 37-8.

¹⁵¹ A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford 1956), vol. II, 75, ad loc.

¹⁵² Cf. J. & L. Robert, *BÉ* 1946/47 no.78; Furley, *Andokides and the herms* (n.96), Ch. 6. Note also Arginusae: Diod. 13.97.5-7.

is certainly the case that after the failure of their expedition to Sicily, the Athenians were angry with independent religious experts as a group: they “were furious with the chresmologues and *manteis* and however many others who encouraged their hope through divination (θείσαντες) that they would capture Sicily” (Thuc. 8.1.1).¹⁵³ Again there was literally no one board that was being attacked, nor one particular oracular interpretation, rather the general point which had been endorsed by a number of soothsayers that the invasion of Sicily was a good idea. It is true, however, that Thucydides has Nicias and the Athenians delay their departure from Sicily by “thrice nine days” because of the interpretation of a lunar eclipse by a group of *manteis* (7.50.4). L. Radermacher observed some time ago, the years from 431 to 413, that is from the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war to the disaster in Sicily, constitute the period of greatest activity for chresmologues and other diviners at Athens.¹⁵⁴

Another way to look at the chresmologues of the “wooden wall” episode is to compare them with the only other instance of a group of unnamed diviners that Herodotus features extensively, namely the *manteis* of the Scythians.¹⁵⁵ We are told that Scythia possesses many *manteis*, and that they perform divination with the help of bundles of rods (ῥάβδοι). Another group of Scythians diviners, the androgynous Enarees, prophesy by means of tree bark (Hdt. 4.67.1-2). The only case of divination that we actually see the Scythian *manteis* engage in, however, involves episodes when their king falls ill. The assumption is that someone has perjured himself by swearing falsely on the king’s hearth, and has thus caused the ruler’s sickness (4.68.2). Three *manteis* are summoned, and with their rods they determine who the guilty party is. The individual is brought before the king and *manteis*, and (not surprisingly) usually denies the charge. A further six *manteis* are then called in, and should they determine that the man is guilty, the matter ends there and the accused is beheaded and his property divided among the original three seers. But if the second group acquit him, more groups of *manteis* are summoned, and if, finally, a majority pronounce the man innocent, the first set of *manteis* are declared

¹⁵³ Cf. B. Jordan, “Religion in Thucydides,” *TAPA* 116 (1986): 119-47; and S. Hornblower, “The religious dimension to the Peloponnesian War, or, what Thucydides does not tell us,” *HSCP* 94 (1992): 169-97.

¹⁵⁴ L. Radermacher, “Euripides und die Mantik,” *RhM* 53 (1898): 504-9.

¹⁵⁵ Groups of unnamed *manteis* are also found at Hdt. 3.124.1, 6.69.3.

“false diviners” (ψευδομάντιας) and are burnt alive and their sons executed, the standard punishment for other misdeeds committed by *manteis* in Scythia (4.69.2).

The story is of course an ethnographic fantasy, but as such, it provides insight into Herodotus’ own understanding of diviners, especially when they act corporately. There are striking differences with concepts we have already met in connection with the Greek seer: the Scythian *mantis* is clearly not independent, but very much under the authority of the king; his method of divination is unparalleled; the fraudulent practice of his art is punished with gruesome death, not exile. But there are intriguing, if inexact parallels. The “true” seer is rewarded not only with life, but also with property—he gains materially through successful divination. He is also, in addition to being a diviner, a doctor and a judge—the first an area of expertise in the Greek world often linked in lists to the *mantis*, as we have seen.¹⁵⁶ But of direct importance is the unanimity of the entire assemblage of *manteis*, summoned to address the problem of the state (the health of the king) at risk. Hartog has suggested that the Scythian diviners literally produce the truth when a majority reach through divination the same findings.¹⁵⁷ The fantasy of the entire passage is most felt, I think, in the absurd—indeed illogical—method by which this majority is determined.¹⁵⁸ As with the “board” of chremologues at Athens, the unanimity of the group of diviners is an illusion, required as a counterpoise to the individual who may or may not be endangering the community, but who is at the center of a state crisis.

The most vexing and difficult feature in Herodotus’ story of the “wooden wall” oracle is the detail that it was written down, and furthermore that this assertion occurs so closely to the historian’s own contention, which he knows to be controversial, that by choosing to resist the invasion of the Persians, Athens saved Greece. It is routinely observed that the standard practice for the recording of oracles in Herodotus is for them to be put down in writing.¹⁵⁹ The same three

¹⁵⁶ Cf. F. Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, J. Lloyd trans. (Berkeley 1988), 127-32. Note also *iatromantis* at Aes. *Eum.* 62

¹⁵⁷ Hartog, *Mirror of Herodotus* (n.156), 131-2.

¹⁵⁸ If new sets of *manteis* are required when the second group finds in favor of the accused, prolonging the process until “a majority” (πλεῖονες Hdt. 4.68.4) is produced is irrelevant, indeed illogical.

¹⁵⁹ E.g. Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* (n.65), 160; D.T. Steiner, *The Tyrant’s Writ: Myths*

episodes are cited: the “wooden wall” oracle, Croesus’ test of oracular shrines (Hdt. 1.47-48), and the oracle given to Mys the Carian at Ptoium (8.135). It is never pointed out that these are in fact also the only cases of oracles being put down in writing in Herodotus out of literally more than one hundred oracular transmissions,¹⁶⁰ and that in each of these three instances an argument can be made that the manner of recording the divine message is of particular importance given the context. In each episode, the inquirer(s) writes down the oracle, not an officer of the shrine. Croesus sends out messengers in order to transcribe the answer each famous oracle will produce in response to the question: what is the king of Lydia doing now? He needs precise recordings in order to determine which oracle is accurate; it is a process of comparison and verification (indeed note the elaborate detail in Herodotus’ description of Croesus’ investigation of the texts, 1.48.1: he unrolls each one and scans them). Mys puts his prophecy in writing because the prophet through whom Apollo communicated remarkably and unexpectedly spoke not in Greek but Carian; he needs to write the oracle down in order to preserve it when those charged with its preservation (three Thebans) were unable to do so,¹⁶¹ and presumably also so that he can translate it for his commander Mardonius.¹⁶² Which brings us back to the “wooden wall” oracle.

Herodotus’ description of the reaction of the Athenian envoys to the oracle mentioning “wooden wall” and “divine Salamis” is crucial. He notes that “this prophecy seemed to them, and in fact was, gentler

and *Images of Writing in Ancient Greece* (Princeton 1994), 80; W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 55 and 83; and idem, “Writing and Literacy in the Archaic Greek City,” in J.H.M. Strubbe, R.A. Tybout, H.S. Versnel, eds., *ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑ: Studies on Ancient History and Epigraphy Presented to H.W. Pleket* (Amsterdam 1996), 67 and n.44 is much more cautious.

¹⁶⁰ E. Levy, “Devins et Oracles chez Hérodote,” in J-G. Heintz, ed., *Oracles et Prophéties dans l’Antiquité* (Paris 1997), 345-6.

¹⁶¹ The Thebans are sent ὡς ἀπογραφομένους τὰ θεσπιεῖν ἔμελλε (Hdt. 8.135.2).

¹⁶² L. Robert, “Le Carien Mys et l’Oracle du Ptôon (Hérodote, VIII, 135),” *Hellenica* 8 (Paris 1950): 23-38; and G. Daux, “Mys au Ptôon (Hérodote, VIII, 135),” in *Hommages à Waldemar Deonna, Collection Latomus* 28 (Bruxelles 1957), 157-62. In connection with Croesus’ test, Asheri noted that either a Lydian envoy must have known Greek, or perhaps an official at Delphi knew Lydian, making more explicable the need for a written response. It had to be translated: D. Asheri, *Erodoto. Le Storie Libro I* (Milan 1988), 292 ad loc., citing the Mys episode. Note, too, at Aes. *Eum.* 31 the need for the applicants to the oracle at Delphi to be Hellenes.

than the first, [and] having written it down they departed for Athens” (ταῦτά σφι ἡπιώτερα γὰρ τῶν προτέρων καὶ ἦν καὶ ἐδόκεε εἶναι, συγγραψάμενοι ἀπαλλάσσοντο ἐς τὰς Ἀθήνας 7.142.1). Although much attention has been paid to the set of oracles, and the second response in particular, no one to my knowledge has bothered to explain why only the second one is described as being written down. The answer is straightforward. Herodotus wanted to show in the historical record that the second oracle was more definitive than the first—in some strange way it had to replace the first. For this process of replacement to be effective in a world that was still largely oral, Herodotus had to make clear that the second oracle was preserved in a way that marked it as different in form from the first, and which furthermore made it appear to have a higher claim to reliability. It is surely the case that he was going against more common attitudes here; for most people, the oral preservation of an oracle was perfectly acceptable, indeed probably the norm.¹⁶³ This is suggested by Herodotus’ apparent insistence on bolstering the reality and accuracy of the second oracle in other ways. Remember, we are told not only that the second was written down, but that it seemed, *and in fact was* (καὶ ἦν καὶ ἐδόκεε εἶναι),¹⁶⁴ “more gentle” (ἡπιώτερα) than the first—a point that Herodotus makes on his own authority.¹⁶⁵

This was a matter of interpretation, and obviously hotly contested, to judge from Herodotus. I find it extremely suggestive that chresmologues again figure in a story involving prophecy, writing, and controversy. These were issues that also came up in the story of Onomacritus and Lasus. It seems as though the fewer intermediary stages there were between a divine communication and its reception and interpretation, the less room there was for controversy. In such a context, chresmologues are invariably going to be regarded with suspicion. Unlike the *mantis* who is authorized to observe and interpret an omen that others can see, or to inspect *ta hiera* at a sacrifice, the chresmologue is often involved either in the presentation of an already delivered oracle, or its interpretation, or most often, both. He is one remove away

¹⁶³ See the appendix.

¹⁶⁴ Note the verb “was” (ἦν) in the sense “[truly] was;” cf. Hdt.’s use of τὸ ἔόν to mean “the truth,” e.g. 1.30.3; Powell (n.73) *Lexicon* 104.

¹⁶⁵ C. Dewald, “Narrative Surface and Authorial Voice in Herodotus’ *Histories*,” in D. Boedeker, ed., *Herodotus and the Invention of History, Arethusa* 20 (Buffalo 1987), 147-70.

from the position occupied by the *mantis*. The fact that he is usually, though not always, connected to writing adds a further complication. Writing has great corroborative power, indeed the “wooden wall” story, if my interpretation is correct, precisely demonstrates this. But it is also a source of suspicion. Thus, in Aristophanes, the fact that Lysistrata (*Lys.* 767-8) and Philocleon (*Wasps* 800) can produce written oracles that have already been composed for emergencies illustrates the popular distrust of a chresmologue’s basic tool—the previously recorded prophecy.¹⁶⁶ It is true that the storage of written oracles was not unprecedented—recall that Herodotus reports that both the Spartans and Pisistratids had collections of them. But I would argue that these were exceptions, and in the case of the Pisistratids at least, also suspect. This story also involves Cleomenes, a man with dubious motives as well as a track-record for meddling with the interpretation of divine communication (see esp. *Hdt.* 6.66.2-3, 79-84). As Thomas has shown, the fifth and fourth centuries were transitional periods where oral and literate cultures coexisted.¹⁶⁷ Herodotus in particular is a figure poised on the divide between them. Still largely “oral” in outlook, he also betrays a strong “documentary mentality,” borrowed perhaps from non-Greek cultures, as though aware of an authoritative role for writing in the preservation of the past.¹⁶⁸

The controversy surrounding the “wooden wall” oracle involves not just the contest between Themistocles and the chresmologues. The episode also is central to a larger argument that Herodotus is trying to make. As the historian has told us himself, he believes, contrary to general opinion, that Athens was the central reason for Greek salvation in the war with Xerxes (*Hdt.* 7.139.1-2). It has for some time been observed that the second oracle, and in particular

¹⁶⁶ Cf. J. Henderson, *Aristophanes Lysistrata* (Oxford 1987), 168 ad loc. For more on previously recorded prophecy, see Graf in this volume, 51-53.

¹⁶⁷ R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1989), and eadem, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1992).

¹⁶⁸ O. Murray, “Herodotus and Oral History,” *Achaemenid History* 2 (1987): 109-110 (= Luraghi, ed., *The Historian’s Craft* (n.145), 36-38; and cf. eundem, in the same volume, “Herodotus and Oral History Reconsidered” 318). Also, W. Burkert, “Lydia between East and West or How to date the Trojan War: A study in Herodotus,” in J.B. Carter and S.P. Morris, eds., *The Ages of Homer* (Austin 1995), 139-48; J.G. Taylor, *Framing the Past: the Roots of Greek Chronography* (Diss. Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor 2000), 87-8. For more on the relation between orality and literacy in oracles, see Frankfurter and Klingshirn in this volume.

the line relating to Salamis, must be *post eventum* and cannot in fact have been delivered as we have it in Herodotus some time in 481 or early 480, before the battle of Salamis itself.¹⁶⁹ And yet it is in the second oracle that we see the divine authorization of Athenian action against the Persians. It is true that the two oracles at 7.140-41 are represented as “dire warnings” which, despite that fact, did not persuade the Athenians to abandon the cause of Greece (7.139.6). But that statement really applies only to the first oracle; it may have applied to the second but for the timely interpretation of Themistocles. Robert Parker has sensibly argued that neither oracle is *post eventum*, but rather were the real alternatives faced by the Athenians at the time.¹⁷⁰ However we are to understand the pair of oracles, Herodotus is very clear when he states that, after the gods, the Athenians were the chief reason for Greek victory (7.139.5). It is in connection with this sentiment that we sense also the force of the second oracle: the gods and Athens together engineered the stunning victory of Salamis. Themistocles and the chresmologues are placed at this point in the narrative because the scene endorses Herodotus’ larger claim: Athens’ successful leadership in the war was divinely ordained. Herodotus relies on the popular distaste for chresmologues, especially when viewed as a group, in order to create an authoritative position for Themistocles and for himself.

CODA: FOURTH CENTURY DIVINERS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

As we move from the fifth to the fourth centuries, we see continuities but also differences in the activity and function of the independent diviner in the Greek world. The biggest development is the almost total disappearance of the chresmologue. Later ones are found, to be sure. Thus, Diodorus refers to Boeotian chresmologues who approached Epaminondas with oracles claiming that the Spartans would be defeated at Leuctra in 371 (15.54.2).¹⁷¹ As we saw, Plato in the *Republic* can still imagine *argurtai* peddling their expertise to the

¹⁶⁹ See, e.g., C. Hignett, *Xerxes’ Invasion of Greece* (Oxford 1963), 442-3; J.F. Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece 490-479 BC* (Warminster 1993), 101.

¹⁷⁰ Parker, “Greek States and Greek Oracles” (n.147), 318.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.7, Paus. 6.13.2-4, Plut. *Pel.* 20.

rich. Aristotle reports that the general Iphicrates once called Callias a μητραγύρτης (*Rh.* 1405a), and Callias' self-promotion as the *dadouchos* of Eleusis is documented by Xenophon in an Athenian embassy to Sparta, also in 371 (*Hell.* 6.3.3-6).¹⁷² But there is no doubt that the highpoint for chresmologues in the Greek world was the fifth century, and chiefly the periods of the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, at least until 413 and the failure of the Athenian expedition to Sicily. In other words, the fortunes of the chresmologues mirror very much the fortunes of Athens. That is largely because, with notable exceptions, chresmologues, regardless of where they may have come from originally, were primarily an Athenian phenomenon. Inasmuch as Athens was the largest, most bureaucratic, and probably most literate *polis*, the chresmologue was ideally suited to this community. But as the city underwent significant change as a result of the disaster in Sicily and subsequent domestic upheaval (the oligarchic coups of 411 and 404), there was no longer room or tolerance for this particular type of independent diviner. We should take Thucydides at his word when he says the Athenians were angry with the chresmologues, though with the *manteis* as well (Thuc. 8.1.1). Until the Sicilian expedition, diviners were common at Athens in particular and seemed to have played important public roles there. This calls for an explanation. The elaboration of the state that took place in the archaic and which continued into the classical was especially felt at Athens. As Davies and Ostwald have suggested, the leadership once enjoyed by the aristocracy there, especially through the religion of the *genê*, was made to give way to increasing popular control of divine matters.¹⁷³ The chresmologue in particular, but the *mantis* as well, must be understood as interruptions in this process: both look like articulations of an elite response to this erosion of authority whereby aristocrats sought to continue to exercise control over religion as independent diviners. They could even take on quasi-official status, as we see with Hierocles, Lampon, and perhaps the chresmologues of 481.

Seen in this light, Euthyphro's remarks at *Euthphr.* 3c look like an

¹⁷² J. Dillery, *Xenophon and the History of his Times* (London 1995), 243 and n.10.

¹⁷³ J.K. Davies, *Wealth and the power of wealth in classical Athens* (Salem 1984), 112-14; M. Ostwald, *From popular sovereignty to the sovereignty of law* (Berkeley 1986), 170-71. Cf. J. Ober, *Mass and elite in democratic Athens* (Princeton 1989), 57-8; D.D. Feaver, "Historical Development in the Priesthoods of Athens," *JCS* 15 (1957): 123-58.

expression of the aristocracy's reaction to this tension. As Euthyphro observes in his discussion with Socrates, some time shortly before the philosopher's trial in 399:

For my own part, when I speak in the Assembly about matters of religion, and tell them in advance what will occur, they laugh at me as if I were a madman, and yet I never have made a prediction that did not come true. But the truth is, they are jealous of all such people as ourselves (*Euthyphr.* 3c, Cooper trans.).

Euthyphro is not a chresmologue, he is a *mantis* (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 27), and yet he is clearly the object of popular hostility. Socrates himself seems to take relish in showing him up as a religious fanatic and is scandalized by his prosecution of his own father for murder. Indeed, the *manteis* do continue, but in Athens at any rate, some of them had to absorb much of the hostility that was once directed at the chresmologues.

In point of fact, the *mantis* seems to be further incorporated into the business of state at Athens in the fourth century. The Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*, in the section relating to the current state of the constitution of Athens in the late 330s, speaks of religious officials "who are to make sacrifices ordered by oracles (μα[ν]τευτὰ ἱερά), and if good omens are required they see to it with the *manteis*" (*Ath. Pol.* 54.6, Moore trans.)—a passage that suggests the further institutionalization of the diviner. Philochorus, too, seems to envision an official *mantis* operating in the Tetrapolis in his own day (*FGrHist* 328 F 75). But there could also be more familiar *manteis* at Athens and elsewhere in the late classical and early hellenistic period. Indeed, in his own career, Philochorus especially comes to mind. A *mantis* and *hieroskopos* (Kett *Prosopographie* no. 69), he was put to death in 260 by Antigonos Gonatas for his support of Ptolemy II Philadelphus during the Chremonidean War (Suda s.v. Φιλόχορος = *FGrHist* 328 T 1). In him one senses we have a successor to the heroic *manteis* of warfare, such as Megistias and the anonymous seer of Munychia, patriots and men whose views mattered to dynasts.

Yet Philochorus was also different from his earlier brethren. He was a man of books and learning—recall that he even wrote a treatise on his own area of expertise, *Peri Mantikês* ("On Seercraft:" *FGrHist* 328 FF 76-79). Importantly, like the chresmologues before him, he also made a collection of oracles "not in meter" (Plut. *De Pyth. Or.* 403E

= *FGrHist* 328 T 6).¹⁷⁴ Similarly, from the beginning of the fourth century there is Symmachus, son of Eumedes, of Pellene, who tells us that he wrote up an honorary inscription in hexameters for the Lycian dynast Arbinas (*SEG* 28.1245). He also informs us that he is a “blameless *mantis*” (μάντις ἀ[μύμων] line 18). Much here does not surprise us: the epic language, and the familiar role—an independent Greek diviner serving a foreign ruler in Asia Minor. Yet Symmachus too, like Philochorus, is also a writer. Being a *mantis* became a much more technical enterprise that overlapped with other literary pursuits. I should mention in this connection the speculation that has surrounded the so-called Derveni Papyrus (end of 5th, start of 4th ?).¹⁷⁵ Kahn has suggested that it was written by a person very like the Platonic Euthyphro, and Tsantsanoglou more generally that it is likely the work of a *mantis*.¹⁷⁶ It has even been argued that Philochorus used the treatise in his own scholarship.¹⁷⁷ There is also the case of Thrasyllus and Polemaenetos (Kett *Prosopographie* nos.38 and 59 respectively). Isocrates reports in a speech dating probably to the 390s that a Siphnian, Thrasyllus, became a guest-friend to a *mantis* by the name of Polemaenetos. On his death, Polemaenetos left to Thrasyllus his books on divination (βίβλους τὰς περὶ τῆς μαντικῆς, Isoc. 19.5), and gave him a share of his property too. According to Isocrates, from that point on Thrasyllus became an itinerant *mantis* himself and lived (disreputably) in several cities (19.6). The point to note is that being a *mantis* is now not something one gets only through family affiliation or inspiration; it can be learned in books, ones perhaps very like the Derveni Papyrus. If we look closely at Socrates’ criticisms of Euthyphro, we note that they are directed especially at the latter’s Orphic bookishness (Plato *Euthyphr.* 6b-c; cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 948-54). Of course this is not to say that more conventional understandings of the source of mantic ability had

¹⁷⁴ I do not take up whether oracular responses were delivered originally in meter: cf. Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle* (n.50), 193-94.

¹⁷⁵ For more on the Derveni Papyrus, see Struck in this volume 152-54.

¹⁷⁶ See C.H. Kahn, “Was Euthyphro the Author of the Derveni Papyrus?,” and K. Tsantsanoglou, “The First Columns of the Derveni Papyrus and their Religious Significance,” in A. Laks and G.W. Most, eds., *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus* (Oxford 1997), 63 and 98-99 respectively.

¹⁷⁷ W. Burkert, “Star Wars or One Stable World? A Problem of Presocratic Cosmogony (*PDerv.* Col. XXV),” in Laks and Most *Derveni Papyrus* (n.176), 174 n.32. Note the reservations of A. Henrichs, “*Hieroi Logoi* and *Hierai Bibloi*: The (Un)written Margins of the Sacred in Ancient Greece,” *HSCP* 101 (2003): 232-33 and nn. 83-84.

disappeared. Thus, on a nearly contemporary stele from the late fifth or early fourth century, the family of one Meidon from Myrrhinus in Attica is listed in an inscription which ends: "I Meidotelus conceal here [in burial] Calliteles, *mantis* son of an honored *mantis*, a wise man and just" (*SEG* 23.161.29-30). The notion that the mantic art persisted in families was clearly still believed.

One of the most noteworthy documents that suggests very clearly a different world from that which we have seen in the course of this paper is an inscription from Colophon dating to c.200-150, first published by J. and L. Robert in 1992.¹⁷⁸ In it one Menophilus of Smyrna is thanked by the people of Colophon for agreeing to be director of their oracular shrine at Claros. The remarkable thing about this text is that Menophilus is actually identified as a chresmologue (line 4). We have come a long way from the time when "chresmologue" meant a charlatan who often ran into difficulties in the community he served, and who certainly would not have been identified as one on a public inscription thanking him for his services. Yet now *chrêsmologos* is a term to be found in an honorific inscription. But some details remain the same. Menophilus is still an outsider who has found a role to play in the religious life of a neighboring community. There is continuity as well as rupture.

We have gone in this essay from the largely oral world of the diviner of myth and legend to the diviner of the book. Along the way a number of larger issues have intersected with the discussion at several points. Indeed, it is fair to say that we have found the religious expert involved in a number of oppositions: a heroic figure who can even sacrifice himself in battle vs. the despised *agurtês* who practices divination in order to profit by it, that is, for a wage; a high-born elite vs. an outsider of doubtful status; an independent figure who can dictate terms even to powerful states vs. a lackey who rubber-stamps the ambitions of potent autocrats. One of the most useful oppositions to look at again here at the end of this essay is the orality/literacy divide, for through this opposition we see the issue of divination and authority most clearly.

I began this paper with the Onomacritus episode and ended with the "wooden wall" oracle. Both are stories from Herodotus that

¹⁷⁸ "Décret de Colophon pour un Chresmologue de Smyrne appelé à diriger l'Oracle de Claros," *BCH* 116 (1992): 279-91 (= *SEG* 42.1065).

feature chresmologues and controversy. Both also raise the problem of writing: in the first case, I tried to show writing was not in fact involved, whereas in the second it was, but was marked and had special importance. Further, I tried to suggest in connection with the second passage that writing introduces into the understanding of divine revelation an intermediary stage, separating the divinatory moment, if you will, from its interpretation and application. It meant that there was potentially a link in this chain that gave human intervention a point of access, and thus the risk that the original communication would be tampered with. The *mantis* communicated the divine will instantly, but the chresmologue worked with what had been revealed long ago. This fact exercised quite an influence on the Greek imagination. Anxiety about the reliability of an older communication newly performed and applied is surely what explains the bizarre story of Epimenides and his tattooed body. It is also at work in Herodotus' forceful defense of Bacis' authority at 8.77. As a criticism, Greek awareness of "after-the-fact" revelation is central to the Aristophanic critique of the underhandedness of chresmologues. The ancient Greeks obviously knew of a number of *post eventum* prophecies, such as the one concerning the "wooden walls" and "divine Salamis," and yet they developed a false-consciousness or cognitive dissonance regarding the matter,¹⁷⁹ perceiving both the patent fictionality of such texts, but needing them nonetheless. Salamis had to be divinely authorized. Chresmologues inhabited precisely a no-man's-land between orality and literacy—channels of divine authority originally transmitted orally, but then mediated through the written text.

Manteis could occupy this space as well, and could be tarred with the same brush—serving in matters of public interest, but ones that happened also to reward them handsomely. But they, even more than the chresmologues, also performed another task in the world of the Greek imagination. Inasmuch as they had more direct access to the divine, already in Homer they represented opportunities for the Greeks

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Dillery, "Reconfiguring the Past" (n.130), 241-2. This essay was completed in draft form when H. Bowden's splendid article, "Oracles for Sale," in P. Derow and R. Parker, eds., *Herodotus and his World. Essays from a Conference in Memory of George Forrest* (Oxford 2003), 256-74 appeared. Although there is some overlap, his tack is substantially different from mine. I do note that his view of the "wooden wall" story as one "designed with an Athenian audience in mind" (273) has obvious and important implications for my own argument. I thank J.S. Clay, J.E. Lendon and J. Mikalson for bibliographic help and discussion.

to think about alternative courses of action, and what is more, about alternative structurings of their societies—worlds where the individual diviner, often an outsider, was on a par with the leader of a community or the community itself. His authority was autonomous and parallel to the authority of the state.

Appendix: Documentary Evidence for Early Written Oracles

It is difficult to determine if it was standard for oracles to be written down in the Greek world in the archaic and classical periods, for our evidence is slender. Burkert maintains that “the preservation of oracular utterances was doubtless one of the earliest applications for the art of writing in Greece, which began to spread around 750” (*Greek Religion* [n.2] 117); Harris basically agrees, asserting that the recording of oracles was one of the first uses of writing (see above n.159). A major difficulty in testing the accuracy of these claims is that the responses themselves were probably written on perishable material: e.g., L.H. Jeffery suggested on the basis of Euripides F 627 Nauck² that the replies at Delphi were on leather (διφθέραι μελεγγραφεῖς; *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, rev. ed. with Supplement by A.W. Johnston [Oxford 1990], 58, 100). Zeus’ oracle at Dodona was unusual; the responses were written on small bronze, then later, lead sheets or strips (Jeffery, *LSAG* 58-9).

But actual oracles are exceedingly rare in archaic documents, and the earliest so far attested seems not to be an oracle at all, rather sacred legislation: *LSAG* 240 no.5 (Cumae). The text, which may be as early as the late seventh century, was interpreted by M. Guarducci to be an actual oracular *sors* in which it was stated that “Hera does not allow further prophecy” (“Un antichissimo responso dell’ oracolo di Cuma,” *Bull. Comm. Arch. di Roma* 72 [1946-48]: 129-41; cf. eandem, *Arch. Class.* 16 [1964]: 136-8; *Epigrafia Greca* [Rome 1967], I.229-30; Jeffery, *LSAG* 238). However, Renahan, building on earlier scholars, has shown that the text should be read instead: “Hera forbids oracular consultations in the morning” (“Hera as Earth-Goddess: a New Piece of Evidence,” *RhM* 117 [1974]: 193-201; cf. *SEG* 40.816). Guarducci’s reading: ἡέρε οὐκ ἔαι ἐπιμαντεύεσθαι. Renahan’s: ἡέρε οὐκ ἔαι ἦρι μαντεύεσθαι. Renahan, in addition to supporting the older reading, also notes that ἐπιμαντεύεσθαι is not an equivalent of ἀναμαντεύεσθαι. He argues that the inscription represents a “polar expression” essentially ordering potential consultants of the shrine to visit only in

the evening. In other words, this is a regulation, not an oracle.

The earliest recorded oracles that can with some security be dated come from the last quarter of the sixth century. One is the oldest response on lead from Dodona (Jeffery *LSAG* 230 no.13), recording an inquiry made by Hermon. The other is an inscribed bone tablet from Berezan (Borysthenes) from the N. shore region of the Black Sea (*SEG* 36.694). Although its meaning is in doubt, the main text has been interpreted as an oracle from Didyma settling a religious controversy between Olbia and Borysthenes: ed. prin., A.S. Rusyayeva, *VDI* (1986) no.2, 25-64, supported and enlarged by W. Burkert, "Apollo of Didyma and Olbia," *VDI* (1990) no.2, 155-60 (cf. *SEG* 40.611), and by S.L. Solovyov, *Ancient Berezan* (Leiden 1999), 96-7, and id., "On the history of the city-states of the Lower Bug area: Borysthenes and Olbia," in J. Boardman, et al., eds., *North Pontic Antiquities in the State Hermitage Museum* (Leiden 2001), 117-8. The comments at *SEG* 36.694 register strong reservations, however, as does L. Onyshkevych, "Interpreting the Berezan bone graffito," in V.B. Gorman and E.W. Robinson, eds., *OIKISTES: Studies in Constitutions, Colonies, and Military Power in the Ancient World, Offered in Honor of A.J. Graham* (Leiden 2002), 161-77. There is a handful of others down to the end of the fifth: a fragmentary text from Didyma (*LSAG* 343 no.36 = *IGA* no.489, end of 6th); more lead strips from Dodona (*LSAG* 228, 230 nos.15-17, 5th); possibly ML no.38 (5th) celebrating a victory of Selinus, if lines 7-11 can be read as a series of divine injunctions. There is also a stele from Troizen recording an oracular response, dedicated by Euthymides (late 5th: *LSAG* 182 no.6 = *IG* IV 760, *SIG*³ 1159).

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VOICES, BOOKS, AND DREAMS: THE DIVERSIFICATION OF DIVINATION MEDIA IN LATE ANTIQUE EGYPT

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I

Divination does not, apparently, provoke the same kind of skeptical amusement that it did a few decades ago. An ancient historian of another generation, still under the sway of Frazer and Dodds, would have taken account of our contemporary divination scene—lottery numbers and Psychic Friends Network, Tarot cards and Ouija Boards and horoscopes—as a veritable cacaphony of rival systems, altogether heralding the breakdown of culture and its great traditions. And indeed I suspect that it is just such discomfiting impressions of contemporary divination that have likewise led ancient historians to regard any historical diversity in divination practices as somehow equivalent to religious decay. The notorious example, of course, is A. A. Barb, who compared oracles and “magic” in late antiquity to rotten food, the derivatives of once-great religious systems now bastardized and purveyed by charlatans.¹ Barb’s view continues to emerge in more recent depictions of Greco-Roman religion, but not because of some basic theoretical obtuseness so much as the ambiguous nature of the evidence.² As one pores through the data for oracle cults in Roman Egypt, for example, one can find everything from lot-oracles to a giant bronze bull connected to a mouthpiece, plus a host of incubation chambers with or alongside temples, and written “ticket” oracles to several crocodile gods. On top of that, the Greek and Demotic “Magical” papyri were proffering all sorts of mantic

¹ A. A. Barb, “The Survival of the Magic Arts,” in A. Momigliano, ed., *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity* (Oxford 1963), 100-125; and “Mystery, Myth, and Magic,” in J. R. Harris, ed., *The Legacy of Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1971), 138-69.

² E.g., Harold Idris Bell, *Cults and Creeds in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Liverpool 1953); repr. (Chicago 1975), 105; Georg Luck, *Ancient Pathways and Hidden Pursuits: Religion, Morals, and Magic in the Ancient World* (Ann Arbor 2000); Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York 2001).

epiphanies, some apparently in the privacy of one's home. Viewed *either* against a backdrop—a nostalgic one—of great Theban cults *or* in anticipation of some homogenized Christianity, this chaos of divination systems in Greco-Roman Egypt would certainly suggest an age of decadence, individualism, and spiritual marketing—an “age of anxiety”: “Am I to be a sophist? Shall I open a factory? Am I to be reconciled with my masters? Am I to be restored to my position? Shall I be a fugitive? Have I been poisoned?”³

I have elsewhere argued against setting this data up against such artificial contrasts as the age of the Pharaohs or the glories of Christendom.⁴ What I'd like to do in this paper is to address the nature of multiple divination systems in late antique Egypt. I want to show how diversification in the media of divination still depended on a center and a tradition, and that one cannot understand mantic innovation unless one takes seriously the traditions and even places to which those innovations make reference.

II

Divination in general is much more complicated than just private superstitions to allay anxiety. In many African cultures it remains, as Philip Peek puts it, “the primary institutional means of articulating the epistemology of a people;”⁵ and I see no reason not to begin thinking about ancient divination from this perspective as well. Divination inevitably involves the layout of some materials or circumstances out of which a range of patterns can result. The range of patterns can be small, as in the single hand of nuts used in Nigerian Ifa divination; it can be broad yet delimited, as in dice or the Tarot card array; or it can be enormous, as in the ecstatic medium's utterances, the shape of an animal's liver, or an arrangement of birds in flight.⁶ The resulting patterns are interpreted—invariably by experts—as the encoded

³ Gerald M. Browne, *The Papyri of the Sortes Astrampsychi*, Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 58 (Meisenheim 1974), 22-23.

⁴ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton 1998), 11-15, 174-79.

⁵ Philip M. Peek, “Introduction: The Study of Divination, Present and Past,” *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing*, P. Peek, ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis 1991), 2.

⁶ Note the diversity of such mantic “pallettes” developed in Hittite temples: Richard H. Beal, “Hittite Oracles,” in Leda Cirao and Jonathan Seidel, eds., *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (Leiden 2002), 57-81.

communications of gods, spirits, or some greater supernatural order. Hence, the materials or circumstances—cards, nuts, sticks, flying birds, or running children—amount to the code, the *langue*, through which the supernatural beings offer their *parole*.⁷ The pattern emergent in the code, the omen proper, precedes the interpretation—the pattern rendered meaningful—which is the oracle proper. Omens, we know, may be provoked as well as simply observed, as in Ifa or card divination; while translating an omen into an oracle is clearly a dialectical process between client, diviner, and the “communicating authorities” of the other world. Thus the chance patterns or responses emerge, through interpretation, as the nuanced expression of a divinity’s will.⁸ From the recognition of a sheep-liver’s peculiar lobes to the inference of a divine military strategy, or from a series of dice rolls to the “instruction” to go to Alexandria, there is a sequence of stages: preparation of the random “palette,” observation of the omen, translation to an oracle.

Divination is ultimately a social drama, both in its ritual elements and its capacity to “process”—to criticize and to legitimate—acts of social significance.⁹ Consequently, divination has also been one of the most dynamic features of culture, maintaining cultural integrity and stability in placid times, while in more complex times creatively reaching out to new materials and idioms to aid people’s transition to new social realities.¹⁰

⁷ On the semiotics of divination materials, see Richard P. Werbner, “Tswapong Wisdom Divination: Making the Hidden Seen,” in Werbner, *Ritual Passage, Sacred Journey: The Process and Organization of Religious Movement* (Washington and Manchester 1989), 19–60.

⁸ Emily Martin Ahern, *Chinese Ritual and Politics* (Cambridge 1981), 53–57, 60–62. On the distinction between omen and oracle, see Giovanni Manetti, *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity*, C. Richardson, trans. (Bloomington and Indianapolis 1993), 6–10. See also theoretical observations by Sarah Iles Johnston, “Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination,” *Arethusa* 34 (2001): 109–10; and Ann Kessler Guinan, “A Severed Head Laughed: Stories of Divinatory Interpretation,” in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (above n. 6), 18–30.

⁹ See George K. Park, “Divination and Its Social Contexts,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 93 (1963): 195–209; repr. in W. Lessa and E. Vogt, eds., *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 2nd ed. (New York, Evanston, and London 1965), 381–92.

¹⁰ See Z. S. Strother, “Smells and Bells: The Role of Skepticism in Pende Divination,” in John Pemberton III, ed., *Insight and Artistry in African Divination* (Washington and London 2000), 111–12, on revitalization of divination for witch-finding, and, on urban uses of divination, E. Thomas Lawson, *Religions of Africa* (San Francisco 1985), 88–89; Liliane Kuczynski, “Return of Love: Everyday Life and African Divination in Paris,”

But it is not a free-for-all. Divination always involves the creative use of tradition: that is, some degree of *authority*, of recognizability, that can be brought to bear on the situation at hand. This tradition may comprise the performative style of a medium, the identity of the speaking god, the divination materials themselves, the expertise of the diviner, or simply the shrine at which divination occurs. Tradition provides the framework, the fixed and sacred theater, for the “chance” occurrence in the materials that signals the god’s own communication. One example from Pharaonic and Greco-Roman Egypt is the processional oracle in which priests would march out of the temple carrying an image of the god on their shoulders. The oracle depended on—indeed, it dramatically conveyed—the traditional authority of the temple, the priesthood, and the god; and within this framework of tradition, the god’s image would be seen to move around on the priests’ shoulders in direct response to a question.¹¹ Astrological forecasts—increasingly established in Egypt through the Hellenistic period—likewise depended on cultural understandings of star movement and above all on the authority and “science” of astrologers. Often themselves affiliated with temples, these experts worked hard to assimilate astrology’s novelty to indigenous gods and portents, like the Nile’s rise and kingship in several Roman-era papyri.¹² In both these cases, divination involved a close combination of the time-honored authoritative and the innovative—sometimes even the exotic.

The use of writing in Roman Egypt, however, was *not* exotic or innovative. It is important to realize this before moving into a closer analysis of Roman ticket- and book-oracles. From at least as far back as the New Kingdom, public divination involved the submission of alternatives to the local god, whether in his shrine or on his processional barque; and these alternatives would be in writing. This was a utilitar-

Anthropology Today 4.3 (1988): 6-9; and Laura S. Grillo, “Divination in Contemporary Urban West Africa,” *Religious Studies News* 9 (1998): 6-7. The dynamic persistence of traditional divination forms is especially true of mediumistic/shamanistic divination: see African materials in Thomas W. Overholt, *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Atlanta 1986), 230-48, and Sri Lankan cases in Patricia Lawrence, “Violence, Suffering, Amman: The Work of Oracles in Sri Lanka’s Eastern War Zone,” in Veena Das et al., eds., *Violence and Subjectivity* (Berkeley 2000), 171-204.

¹¹ A. G. McDowell, *Jurisdiction in the Workmen’s Community of Deir El-Medina* (Leiden 1990), 107-14; Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 145-48, 153-56.

¹² Alexander Jones, “The Place of Astronomy in Roman Egypt,” *The Sciences in Greco-Roman Society* (*Apeiron* 27. 4), ed. T. Barnes (Edmonton, Alb. 1994), 25-51.

ian notion of writing—the equivalent of preparing a card-deck—quite different from its use in the recording of mantic proclamations. And although few in Egyptian society could write or read the alternatives prepared for the god's choice—the procedure invariably depended on priests—Egyptians understood writing as integral to the technology of divination from an early point in history.¹³ This facet of Egyptian divination allowed not only an *elaborate scribal enterprise*—records of oracular decisions, commentaries on past oracles, commemorative metrical graffiti—but also an *amuletic character* to the written decisions of the god. Writing, as numerous scholars have observed, held a distinct numinosity in ancient religions, carrying the word of the god beyond the temple and even the divination episode, sometimes for one's entire life.¹⁴

Divination and the pursuit of ritual frameworks for the interpretation of events did not, of course, exhaust the functions of Egyptian temple cults. Temples provided amulets. Temples provided people of all classes a sense of religious center and authority in the landscape: the locus of festivals and processions, of divine images, and of the mysterious, efficacious chanting of priests. With divination we are discussing the performative and interpretive means by which priests drew that religious authority over the concerns and choices of life, over history and its vicissitudes, and over meaningfulness in experience.

¹³ Although writing was unusual in Greek divination, a fourth-century BCE inscription describes the Athenians' use of written alternatives to establish the gods' will on the use of a sacred grove. The alternative decisions are inscribed on tin plates, which are then wrapped, placed in a jar, shaken around, emptied and placed sequentially in two further jars—one gold and one silver—the final choice of which is submitted verbally to the oracle at Delphi. The mantic process thus incorporated writing but depended integrally on oral consultation with the Delphic seer. Inscriptions: *SIG*³ I.204, 31-51; *IG* II² 204. I am indebted to Christopher Faraone for this intriguing parallel.

¹⁴ See William Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri," *ANRW* 2.18.5 (1995): 3448-56; Dominique Valbelle and Geneviève Husson, "Les questions oraculaires d'Égypte: Histoire de la recherche, nouveautés et perspectives," in Willy Clarysse et al., eds., *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years* 2, OLA 85 (Leuven 1998), 1055-71; with general comments by Mary Beard, "Writing and Religion: Ancient Literacy and the Function of the Written Word in Roman Religion," in J. H. Humphrey, ed., *Literacy in the Roman World*, *JRA* Supp. 3 (Ann Arbor 1991), 35-58, and Jacqueline Champeaux, "De la parole à l'écriture: Essai sur le langage des oracles," in J.-G. Heintz, ed., *Oracles et prophéties dans l'antiquité* (Paris 1997), 405-38.

III

We must consider these traditional divination technologies when we turn to the oracle of the god Bes that established itself in the Osireion at Abydos from the early centuries of the common era. This temple had apparently hosted an incubation oracle under the aegis of the hybrid god Serapis from some point in the Hellenistic period.¹⁵ It is a continuing question for Egyptologists how hitherto sacrosanct temple preserves could be opened up to the kind of popular incubation implied in the graffiti that cover the exterior walls.¹⁶ What is more interesting to me is the extension of the major Egyptian Osiris temple to, first, dreams of Sarapis and then the multiple communications of Bes, a popular fertility and protective god with hardly any known shrines (although a festival, celebrated at least in second-century CE Dendara).¹⁷

Here, indeed, is our first encounter with the problem of tradition and innovation in a period dominated by Greek language and immigrants and multiple new gods like the Dioscuri. Are these innovations—Serapis and Bes—at Abydos the result of shameless marketing by decrepit temple staff? No: they were creative extensions of Osiris: Serapis obviously and Bes—so a later oracle spell shows us—as the mythical guardian of Osiris’s head.¹⁸ These kinds of developments show the active synthetic work of priesthoods and are hardly unusual in the history of Egyptian religion or religions cross-culturally. As

¹⁵ It has been argued that the Sarapis cult originated as a dream-oracle cult: see Philippe Borgeaud and Youri Volokhine, “La formation de la légende de Sarapis: une approche transculturelle,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 2.1 (2000): 37-76.

¹⁶ Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 162-69.

¹⁷ Known Bes shrines in Bahariya oasis (see Zahi Hawass, *Valley of the Golden Mummies* [New York 2000], 168-73) and Saqqara (see J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1905-1906)* [Cairo 1907], 12-14 + pls. xxvi-xxxiii). Bes-devotion was integrated with other major cults, however: see Véronique Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece* (Oxford 1993), 80-82; and Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 124-31. Attestation of *Bēsia* at Dendara: P. Heid. inv. 1818, on which Herbert C. Youtie, “The Heidelberg Festival Papyrus: A Reinterpretation,” *Scriptiunculae* 1 (Amsterdam 1973), 514-45, esp. 524-25.

¹⁸ See Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt*, 53, 77; David Frankfurter, “Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category ‘Magician’,” in P. Schäfer and H. Kippenberg, eds., *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Studies in the History of Religions 75 (Leiden 1997), 122-24, and *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 172-73; and Françoise Dunand, “La consultation oraculaire en Égypte tardive: L’Oracle de Bès à Abydos,” *Oracles et prophéties dans l’antiquité*, 73-74. Before the Hellenistic period, the “dwarf” who guarded Osiris’s head was not generally named Bes.

anthropologists have found in India, priesthoods continually domesticate great gods, elevate popular gods, and adjust the potential of older gods for new cultural exigencies. Bes was already the subject of such priestly reinterpretation and “pantheization” in the early Hellenistic period, as we see in his spectacular winged and multi-headed form in the Brooklyn Magical Papyrus.¹⁹

How then did Bes speak? First of all, a concentration of votive graffiti to Bes outside an apparently inaccessible portion of the old Memnonion suggests an incubation oracle.²⁰ Hailed as “lord, greatest god, truthful in oracles,” and “dreamgiver,” Bes may well also have “spoken” to select patrons from this hidden alcove. That is, while supplicants might come to sleep and gain oracular dreams in this temple, at some occasions a voice might come from behind the walls. The nature of these voice oracles, I should say, is quite unclear: was it a sound or a sensible message? Was it meant for one patron or all? And of course, what were the states or intentions of the priests who uttered these messages? Voice oracles were not, to be sure, rare in the Greco-Roman period.²¹ Yet they do seem to have operated as an elaboration of the incubation oracle, turning a place where the god spoke in dreams into a place where he could communicate vocally as well.

Of course, we should be circumspect about what incubation involved as a divination process. Despite the breathless testimonies to divine epiphanies that we find inscribed at some incubation sites (like the famous paean to Mandulis Aion at Kalabsha), one probably did not dream of the god in his typical iconographic form. From the wide range of dream codes recorded in ancient interpretation manuals and the initially ambiguous theophanies described in Greco-Roman literature (even Christian), I would suspect that the incubant would not necessarily behold Bes as the feather-headed, leonine dwarf so

¹⁹ Serge Sauneron, *Le papyrus magique illustré de Brooklyn* (Brooklyn 1970); cf. Michel Malaise, “Bes et les croyances solaires,” in Sarah Israelit-Groll, ed., *Studies in Egyptology Presented to Miriam Lichtheim* (Jerusalem 1990), vol. 2, 680-729, and Dimitri Meeks, “Le nom du dieu Bès et ses implications mythologiques,” in Ulrich Luft, ed., *The Intellectual Heritage of Egypt: Studies Presented to László Kákossy*, *Studia aegyptiaca* 14 (Budapest 1992), 423-36. In general on the Bes oracle at Abydos, see Dunand, “L’Oracle de Bès à Abydos,” 65-84, and Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 169-74.

²⁰ Dunand, “L’Oracle de Bès à Abydos,” 67-68, and Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 173-74, n.126.

²¹ See Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 150-52.

popular in terracotta statuary, but rather in some vaguer form.²² The god Thoth, for example, appears as a “young officer” to the expert priestly incubant Hor, while the healing god Imouthes manifests himself as a giant shining figure to an anonymous author’s distraught mother. Like the polymorphic Christ in many early Christian visionary texts, neither gods are recognizable until they actually introduce themselves in the dream or vision.²³ Incubation shrines in Egypt were customarily staffed with professional dream interpreters; and it would presumably be this expert’s purpose to identify Bes’s presence in the dream and the communication Bes sought to transmit.²⁴

By the middle of the fourth century CE, the oracle of Bes at Abydos had gained an international reputation. Ammianus Marcellinus describes the procedures that allowed this expansion, even while he stresses the god’s distinctly Egyptian character. “In the furthest part of the Thebaid,” he begins,

there is a town called Abydos, where a god locally called Besa used to reveal the future through an oracle and was worshipped with traditional rites by the inhabitants of the surrounding regions. Some of those who consulted the oracle did so in person, others sent a letter by an intermediary containing an explicit statement of their requests. In consequence, records of their petitions on paper or parchment sometimes remained in the temple even after the replies had been given.²⁵

Thus we learn that the incubation/voice oracle had expanded over the

²² On the consolidation of Bes iconography by the early Hellenistic period, see Dasen, *Dwarfs*, 59-60, and Youri Volokhine, *La frontalité dans l’iconographie de l’Égypte ancienne*, Cahiers de la Société d’Égyptologie 6 (Geneva 2000), 69-75. Dasen (59) cites an entry in the *Suda* on Βησῶς that suggests that well into late antiquity people (presumably in Alexandria) associated the god’s image with “standing gaping with one’s mouth open, in a stupid way.”

²³ Hor’s dream of Thoth (II BCE): John D. Ray, *The Archive of Hor* (London 1976), #8; cf. #13: an obscure god on a lotus. Vision of Imouthes (text from II CE): P.Oxy 11.1381. On polymorphism of Christ in early Christian texts like Revelation and *Acts of John* 88-93, see Hugues Garcia, “La polymorphie du Christ: Remarques sur quelques définitions et sur de multiples enjeux,” *Apocrypha* 10 (1999): 16-55. In general see Athanase Kyriazopoulos, “Les épiphanes des dieux dans les papyrus de l’époque impériale,” in Bärbel Kramer, et al., eds., *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Berlin 1995*, Archiv für Papyrusforschung, Beiheft 3, 556-62. Stuttgart 1997.

²⁴ On professional dream-interpreters at incubation shrines, see Ray, *Archive of Hor*, 135-36; cf. 132.

²⁵ Ammianus 19.3-4, tr. Walter Hamilton, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Later Roman Empire* (Harmondsworth 1986), 181.

Roman period to receive, as it were, mail inquiries, some conducted over tremendous distance. It is likely that these long-distance written inquiries were a development of locally administered “ticket” oracles known especially from the cult of Soknopaiou Nesos in the Fayyum: clients would pass two alternative instructions on a practical matter, in writing, to the oracle attendants, and the god, as it were, would return the correct instruction.²⁶ Indeed, what brings down the Abydos cult, according to Ammianus, is the fact that Romans of high station were submitting inquiries of a political nature—one of the chief fears of Roman officials: “magical” interventions in the political order. Thus in 359 the emperor Constantius II dispatched an envoy to shut down the cult and determine how extensively it had been consulted.

It is worth noting how extensive the scribal apparatus would have been to cultivate this international reputation and to handle inquiries and records. By the fourth century, Egyptian priests had grown adept at recasting their traditions and roles for Roman exotic tastes.²⁷ And indeed, three private Bes-oracles in Greek preserved among the Greek and Demotic spell manuals suggest that some of these priests were taking the Bes oracle, as it were, “on the road.” The texts present themselves as *oneiratêta* of Bes, invoke him as the “headless god . . . placed over *anankê*” and as “oracle-giving.” They describe rites in preparation for sleep: “put around your hand a black cloth of Isis . . . sleep on a rush mat, having an unbaked brick beside your head.” And they provide rough sketches of Bes to copy onto one’s hand (and presumably to contemplate before sleep). These spells apparently served the pursuit of Bes dream oracles anywhere.²⁸

It is, of course, important to consider these spells as intimate examples of that broader “dis-location” of the holy described by Peter Brown and Jonathan Z. Smith, in which the communicative potential of established shrines is displaced centrifugally to private rites and holy

²⁶ On the function of priestly attendants, see Valbelle and Husson, “Les questions oraculaires d’Égypte,” 1069-70.

²⁷ David Frankfurter, “The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt: Religious Worlds and Actors,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 2.2 (2000): 162-94.

²⁸ PGM VIII.64-110; PGM VII.222-49; PGM CII.1-17; see Dasen, *Dwarfs*, 75-76, and Frankfurter, “Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt,” 123. The brick mentioned in PGM VIII may invoke Bes’s associations with fertility and childbirth; see now Ann Macy Roth and Catherine H. Roehrig, “Magical Bricks and the Bricks of Birth,” *JEA* 88 (2002): 121-39.

men.²⁹ Such freelance Bes dream-oracles probably would not have been composed and disseminated—three copies are extant—before the consolidation of the Abydos cult's reputation. However, it would be erroneous to see these spells, or the fourth-century Bes oracle institution for that matter, as some bizarre hybrids of defunct Egyptian tradition. Nor should the spells be taken as supplanting reverence for traditional centers. The spells make reference not to Greco-Roman or Jewish gods but to traditions about Bes and Osiris that go back to the nineteenth dynasty and could only have been preserved in temple archives or among experts dedicated to such preservation.³⁰ There is a deliberate adherence to priestly tradition here, and we should assume the three Greek *exempla* stem from an original—Demotic or Greek—maintained in the scriptorium. Whether or not the clients of the portable dream-oracles would have recognized the obscure mythological allusions to Bes as guardian of Osiris's corpse—which bear no resemblance to popular Bes iconography—the copyists who disseminated the spells in manuals seem to have regarded the traditional language as vital for the efficacy of the rite.

As for the status of the center, Abydos maintains its unique importance as the site of Bes's oracles up until 359 when Constantius shuts it down. Although another Bes shrine of the Roman era has recently been identified in the Bahariya oasis, it had no relationship to Abydos, and there is no evidence—literary or archaeological—of Bes shrines popping up in other Egyptian cities or around the empire. Indeed, Abydos is invoked as the place where *Osiris* gives messages in two other ritual spells of the fourth century—an anachronism only understandable in terms of priestly preservation.³¹

The center thus held: incubation oracles both *in situ* and elsewhere;

²⁹ Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 1978); Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Temple and the Magician," *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*, *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity* 23 (Leiden 1978), 172-89.

³⁰ Cf. P. Harris 8.5-9.5 (J. F. Borghouts, trans., *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* [Leiden 1978], #134); PDM xiv.627-35 (= P. London/Leiden, col. XXI.1-9), which hails the defunct corpse of Osiris, described much like the Osirian corpse in the Bes-spells, as "the one who gives answer in Abydos." On Bes's chthonic, Osirian associations, see László Kákosy, "Der Gott Bes in einer koptischen Legende," *Acta antiqua academiae scientiarum Hungaricae* 14 (1966): 193-94. It is this mythological link that may explain Bes's assumption of Osiris/Sarapis's oracular voice at Abydos in about the third century CE.

³¹ PGM IV.12; PDM xiv.628.

voice oracles; letter oracles—and probably the ticket oracles from which they developed—all referred back to Abydos as the site of Bes's communications. Even a century later, the Coptic *Life of Apa Moses of Abydos* recalls the temple as haunted by the “demon” Bes. To the monastic author the god is an affliction to the villagers, wreaking illness on passersby;³² but I suspect that a more local *devotion* continued—and quite likely incubation as well.³³

The Bes cult cannot have been unique in late antique Egypt, either for its resilience or for its creative expression of divination media. Other established oracles continued in Oxyrhynchus, Menouthis, and Philae well through late antiquity. But its very centeredness in the old Osiris temple does challenge some of the most durable scholarly impressions of divination in the Roman world. “Oracles and divination,” mused one senior British Egyptologist, for example, “are rather like an addictive drug: the more the gods are sought, the more they retreat from view. This is one reason why revealed religion is so opposed to such practices. Raise the stone and there you shall find me, he quotes Jesus, cleave the wood and there I am.”³⁴ Once again, mantic diversity provides the foil to Christian truth. And yet even Christianity was never quite this pantheistic in any of the places it was absorbed. Indeed, we should turn to the cult of St. Colluthus in Antinoë not as a study in religious contrasts but rather as another example of how, in late antique Egypt, multiple divination procedures clustered around well-established shrines.

³² On Apa Moses's exorcism of the Abydos Bes shrine see the *Vita* in Émile Amélineau, *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne aux IV^e et V^e siècles*, Mémoires publiés par les membres de la mission archéologique française au Caire 4 (Paris 1888-95), 680-706, and Walter Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Martyrerlegenden*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 108 (Rome 1936), 46-81, with codicological reconstruction, major commentary, and translation now in Mark R. Moussa, “Abba Moses of Abydos” (M.A. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1998). Discussions in René-Georges Coquin, “Moïse d'Abydos,” in *Deuxième journée d'études coptes*, Strasbourg 25 mai 1984, Cahiers de la bibliothèque copte 3 (Louvain 1986), 1-14, and Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 129-31, 174.

³³ Still in the fifth century Abbot Shenoute knows of “divination places” where “people dream dreams”: Vienna K 9040, ll. 7-11, ed. Dwight Wayne Young, *Coptic Manuscripts from the White Monastery: Works of Shenute* (Vienna 1993), 23-24.

³⁴ John D. Ray, “Ancient Egypt,” in Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker, eds., *Oracles and Divination* (Boulder, CO, 1981), 187.

IV

St. Colluthus was only one of a great number of Christian regional shrines offering oracular services. Cults of Saints Menas, Victor, and John and Cyrus in the north were major healing-incubation centers; cults of Saints Philoxenus in Oxyrhynchus and Leontius in some unknown site had thriving ticket oracles; and Bishop Athanasius complains that people were flocking to martyrs' tombs to ask the spirits—or "demons," as he puts it—about the future. Clearly Christianization proceeded in tandem with, if not by means of, the establishment of such shrines.³⁵

The promises of oracular healing at martyria by the immanent power of the saint come out quite frankly in the martyrologies written, copied, and expanded over Coptic history: "every one in whom dwells any illness," Christ assures Apa Sarapammon before his next disembowelling, "who goes into your shrine whole-heartedly and prays to you for her illness, I will hear them, whether the illness is fever . . . , whether he be possessed . . . or afflicted by charms . . . or by any terrible illness, let him bring a pot of water and a censer of incense and a full offering. And let him give the pot of water to the priest and let him make the offering over it for seven days with gratitude. I will give healing to that man in your shrine."³⁶ Apa Elijah's martyrion "will be an eternal temple . . . and any man who is sick with any illness who enters your shrine and makes supplication in your name I will bless them with healing."³⁷ And despite all the gestures to Christ, it

³⁵ See Arietta Papaconstantinou, "Oracles chrétiens dans l'Égypte byzantine: Le témoignage des papyrus," *ŽPE* 104 (1994): 281-86, and *Le culte des saints en Égypte des byzantins aux abbassides: L'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes* (Paris 2001), 336-39; Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 193-95; and Geneviève Husson, "Les questions oraculaires chrétiennes d'Égypte: Continuités et changements," in Bärbel Kramer, et al., eds., *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Berlin 1995*, Archiv für Papyrusforschung, Beiheft 3, 482-89. Stuttgart 1997. Athanasius, *Festal Letter* 42, L.-Th. Lefort, ed., CSCO 150, S. Coptici 19 (Louvain 1955), 65, on which see David Brakke, "Athanasius of Alexandria and the Cult of the Holy Dead," *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997): 12-18, and in general Theofried Baumeister, *Martyr Invictus: Der Martyrer als Sinnbild der Erlösung in der Legende und im Kult der frühen koptischen Kirche*, Forschungen zur Volkskunde 46 (Münster 1972), 68-71.

³⁶ *Martyrdom of Sarapammon*, Henri Hyvernat, ed., *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte tiré des manuscrits coptes de la Bibliothèque Vaticane et du Musée Borgia* (Paris 1886), 313-14, trans. adj. from Violet MacDermot, *The Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East* (London 1971), 693.

³⁷ *Martyrdom of Apa Elijah*, f. 29-30, G. P. G. Sobhy, ed., *Le martyre de saint Hélias*

was understood that the martyr himself made real visitations to the incubant in her dreams. One woman in the shrine of Apa Victor cried aloud to the saint, then fell asleep. "Then," the text continues, "he came to her in a vision, bearing the honours of a king, while his face gave light like the sun, and a great perfume came forth from his mouth, a rod of light in his right hand."³⁸

Whether or not the origin of the cult of St. Colluthus can be traced to an historical martyr under Maximian, a shrine seems to have been erected in Antinoë by the beginning of the fifth century, and—by Palladius's witness—it seems immediately to have begun promoting the saint's availability to incubants.³⁹ Subsequent miracle cycles describe the variety of afflictions, demonic and physical, that drew people to sleep in the martyrion and behold visions of the saint, as well as the distances people travelled to the shrine. Like Victor, Colluthus would appear in person to the incubant in dreams, surrounded by light and glory.⁴⁰ The cult of St. Colluthus is thus a typical example of the Coptic incubation center, promoting itself quite successfully over the middle ages as the site of a divinity's presence.

But in the sixth century we see the Colluthus cult's endeavor to diversify its media of divination. An Italian team found over seventy oracle tickets in excavations in Antinoë, directed to "the God of St. Colluthus" or some variation on that formula and requesting favor or advice by means of the ticket returned: "God of St. Colluthus, if it is your will that [something take place], return to me this ticket."⁴¹ As

(Cairo 1919), 57-58. See additional examples of these promises to cult patrons in Youhanna Nessim Youssef, review of Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, in *Bulletin de la société d'archéologie copte* 40 (2001): 143-47.

³⁸ Vienna K 9442, f.20v, ed. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Martyrerlegenden*, 46-47, tr. MacDermot, *Cult of the Seer*, 703.

³⁹ Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 60. On the erection of the martyrion, see Lucia Papini, "Fragments of the *Sortes Sanctorum* from the Shrine of St. Colluthus," in David Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, RGRW 134 (Leiden 1998), 395 with n.6, and Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 289. Gertrud van Loon informs me that images of St. Colluthus have been identified in the VI-VIII CE cave church of Abu Hinnis, near the historical Antinoë, although this would have been an auxiliary cult, not the incubation center.

⁴⁰ *Miracles of St. Colluthus* II, Giorgi, ed. (Rome 1793), 229, tr. Paul Devos, "Un étrange miracle copte de saint Kolouthos: Le paralytique et la prostituée," *Analecta Bollandiana* 96 (1980): 369; see also idem, "Autres miracles coptes de saint Kolouthos," *AnBoll* 99 (1981): 285-301.

⁴¹ See Sergio Donadoni, "Una domanda oracolare cristiana da Antinoe," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 29 (1954): 183-86; Lucia Papini, "Biglietti oracolari in copto dalla

with tickets for other Coptic oracles, those for St. Colluthus carried crosses and other *nomina sacra*, suggesting that the ticket would assume talismanic properties after delivery, guarding the bearer in her directed pursuit.⁴²

With such an elaborate procedure, it is worth thinking about the *staffing* involved in the operation of the Colluthus shrine. There is certainly, as at Abydos, a large scribal apparatus for developing the miracle cycles and martyrologies and for inscribing the twin oracle tickets. It is quite possible that those inscribing the tickets would have had a more *peripheral* status in the cult than those copying books about the martyrs. Yet the tickets had to be placed somewhere near the tomb and the saint's choice of ticket had to be noticed according to some traditional code—activities that assume the role of shrine professionals.⁴³

Another way in which shrine professionals maintained divination under St. Colluthus would have been in interpreting dreams gained in incubation. Dream interpreters, like the *muqaddamun* of Moroccan saint shrines, draw the supplicants' recollections of their dreams into a wider autobiographical and moral framework and gently insinuate the saint's authority over personal matters. Some of the Colluthus miracles too describe the role of a shrine *patér*, to whom the incubant reports her dreams for decoding, who pronounces some blessings, and who generally maintains the cult *in situ*.⁴⁴

It is in this context of oracle shrine professionals that I want to introduce evidence for a *third* kind of divination at St. Colluthus: the use of a *Sortes* book. This was a phenomenon that evolved in about the third century CE as a hybrid of the ticket oracle.⁴⁵ The early *Sortes* books, published under the aegis of an Egyptian sage named Astrampsychos,

necropoli nord di Antinoe," in Tito Orlandi and Frederik Wisse, eds., *Acts of the Second International Congress of Coptic Study* (Rome 1985), 245-55; and Papaconstantinou, "Oracles chrétiens dans l'Égypte byzantine," 282-83, and *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 338-39. "Ticket" is alternately Greek *pittakion* and Coptic *ouoshbt*.

⁴² Cf. G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 2 (1982), 40, and Husson, "Les questions oraculaires chrétiennes d'Égypte," 485.

⁴³ See Papaconstantinou, "Oracles chrétiens dans l'Égypte byzantine," 285, and *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 343, 347.

⁴⁴ See Devos, "Le paralytique et la prostituée," 370-71, 374.

⁴⁵ Valbelle and Husson point out that *Sortes* questions emphasized mercantile concerns at the expense of agricultural matters: "Les questions oraculaires d'Égypte," 1065-67.

addressed approximately one hundred questions typical of the concerns of late antique folk—from business and travel anxieties to health and conception—and they contained, scattered among some hundred columns, ten possible answers to each question. In consultation with the professional diviner, a client would find her concern among the hundred options and then, by an intricate procedure, be directed to one particular answer among the columns—which reflected the gods' or book's will. The procedure involved choosing a number—perhaps thinking of it or casting some object; and the answer, we may infer from cross-cultural parallels to the procedure, might be nuanced to the client's particular situation.⁴⁶ What is important about the *Sortes* books, as Mary Beard and others have written, is that it located divine communication in a *text*, whose operation depended ultimately on the owner's literacy—and presumably also on his authority as interpreter of texts. The *Sortes Astrampsychi* stood alongside other texts appropriated for mantic purposes, like Homer and the Christian Bible.⁴⁷ This was an age when books with pedigrees could be plausibly viewed as direct links to the supernatural world. The *Sortes* books themselves evolved through late antiquity to embrace popular Mediterranean deities and ultimately Christian saints as the supernatural authority behind the oracle. At shrines and monasteries such books would even be complemented by horoscopic almanacs that offered agricultural oracles.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Critical editions by Browne (above, n. 3), and Randall Stewart, *Sortes Astrampsychi* II (Munich and Leipzig 2001), with translation by Stewart and Kenneth Morrell, "The Oracles of Astrampsychus," in William Hansen, ed., *An Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis 1998), 291-324. On the nature of the procedure, see Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 179-84. For a Chinese analogue, see Ahern, *Chinese Ritual and Politics*, 60-62.

⁴⁷ On *Sortes* as example of sacred text, see Beard, "Writing and Religion," and other sources above, n.14. On Homer oracles, see Franco Maltomini, "P.Lond. 121 (= PGM VII), 1-221: Homeromanteion," *ΣΠΕ* 106 (1995): 107-22. On bible oracles, see Otto Stegmüller, "Zu den Bibelorakeln im Codex Bezae," *Biblica* 34 (1953): 13-22. In general Pieter W. van der Horst, "Sortes: Sacred Books as Instant Oracles in Late Antiquity," in L. V. Rutgers et al., eds., *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (Leuven 1998), 143-73.

⁴⁸ Terry Wilfong, "Agriculture among the Christian Population of Early Islamic Egypt: Practice and Theory," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 96 (1999): 224-33. On the structural relationship between the *Sortes Sanctorum* and the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, see Paul Canart and Rosario Pintaudi, "PSI XVII Congr. 5: Un système d'oracles chrétiens ('Sortes Sanctorum')," *ΣΠΕ* 57 (1984): 85-90. On the historical association of *Sortes sanctorum* books with saints' shrines and festivals see William E. Klingshirn, "Defining

The *Sortes* fragments from the St. Colluthus site contain responses: "... walk and go without delay, because God is the one who fights for you and will remove your enemies ..."; or "... it happened to you, because God is the one who fights for you and will grant for you your request without delay. Go ..." ⁴⁹ Hence, they could stem, as their editor suggests, from an integrated divination book like the *Sortes Astrampsychi*; or they could be interpretations of biblical verses chosen in oracular consultation. Either way, they show St. Colluthus shrine attendants actively involved in book-based divination practice—not just "allowing" it to happen. Whether the oraclemongers are monks or priests or lectors of some lower rank, they would be helping people to negotiate misfortune and uncertainty through this captivating, textual form of divine speech. ⁵⁰

Indeed, we can see that these multiple oracular services advanced the authority of St. Colluthus and Christian ideology itself. As the formulaic addresses in ticket oracles remind patrons that St. Colluthus is but the medium for *P-Noute*—God—so the *Sortes* book endorses an austere monotheism that contrasts vividly with those rich Coptic pantheons in magical texts, apocalypses, and martyrologies. The oracle in this case did not only represent the *maintenance* of tradition in the cultural landscape; it also, as we saw in the Bes dream-spells, represented one of the chief areas of *innovation* in Egyptian religion, aiding here in the establishment of Christianity. Since, again, divination involves means of communication between society and a supernatural order, it allows innovation at two dimensions: in the techniques of communication, as we saw with the Bes oracle, but also in the definition of that supernatural order. And thus traditional forms of divination became the means of defining and authenticating a Christian pantheon. ⁵¹

the *Sortes Sanctorum*: Gibbon, Du Conage, and Early Christian Lot Divination," *JECs* 10, 1 (2002): 88-89. Further on the development of *Sortes* books in antiquity see the essays by Graf, Grottanelli, and Klingshirn in this volume.

⁴⁹ Antinoë *Sortes Sanctorum* Frag. I, side B, ed. Papini, "Fragments of the *Sortes Sanctorum*," 400.

⁵⁰ There is evidence for the use of *Sortes* also at Delphi, presumably among those who did not have access to the seer: Pierre Amandry, *La mantique apollinienne à Delphes: Essai sur le fonctionnement de l'oracle* (Paris 1950), 25-36.

⁵¹ Compare the synthesis of Arab-Muslim and indigenous divination technologies in Madagascar: Pierre Vêrin and Narivelo Rajaonarimanana, "Divination in Madagascar: The Antemoro Case and the Diffusion of Divination," *African Divination Systems*, 53-68.

But in advancing the spare authority of *P-Noute*, “God,” the *Sortes* book was insinuating orthodox ideology into the divination process. This ideological use of a divination book resembles the way the Bible was being promoted in early Egyptian Christianity: as likewise the principal locus of mantic power, even to the extent of supplanting the martyrs’ oracles.⁵² Books, for some writers, had the potential to maintain an orthodoxy while martyria diversified supernatural powers and their control.

Some church historians might regard these incipient theological tensions as evidence for wider struggles over the ideological definition of Christianity in late antique Egypt: *P-Noute* or Christ over Apa Colluthus, textuality versus vision, local versus regional authority—competition in every domain. But the evidence is not sufficient to verify such wider tensions. Rather, it may be more useful to see in the St. Colluthus cult the same complex dynamics of promotion we saw in the Abydos Bes cult. At Abydos too, literate religious specialists were advancing the authority and oracular presence of a god in his shrine through the creative deployment of various ritual media. It is certainly not surprising to see these dynamics in a period of acrimonious, even brutal attempts at centralization as occurred in the fifth through seventh centuries, just as the Bes cult prospered creatively in a time of politico-religious *de*-centralization. It is in such times, we know from cross-cultural studies, that local cults get enormously creative in the definitions of their gods and the means they offer for interaction with those gods.

In this light, it cannot be a coincidence that the first Christian cult established in the village of Plewit, documented as one of the most resilient “hold-outs” against Christianization, was a St. Colluthus shrine. The notorious Abbot Shenoute tried to storm Plewit with a group of monks at some point in the later fifth century, but its people and priests were so devoted to the old religion that Shenoute had no success.⁵³

⁵² On competition between oracles shrines and the promotion of scripture, see Leslie S. B. MacCoull, “Duke University Ms. C25: Dreams, Visions, and Incubation in Coptic Egypt,” *OLP* 22 (1991): 123-32, and David Brakke, “Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria’s Thirty-Ninth *Festal Letter*,” *HTR* 87 (1994): 410-17. On Christian bibliomancy see also van der Horst, “Sacred Books as Instant Oracles,” 151-59.

⁵³ Shenoute, “Only I Tell Everyone Who Dwells in This Village,” Leipoldt, ed., 88-90 (#26); Besa, *V. Shenoute*, 83-84. See Jacques van der Vliet, “Spätantikes Heidentum in Ägypten im Spiegel der koptischen Literatur,” *Begegnung von Heidentum*

Even in the mid-sixth century a Coptic encomium remembers the village as *anomos*, even as “the land of Sodom.” But this same encomium was delivered at the inauguration of a healing-incubation shrine to St. Colluthus. Thus Christianity gained legitimacy: not through Shenoute’s assault but through the revitalization of oracles.⁵⁴

V

With this multiplication of St. Colluthus shrines I want to return to my larger theme: how to interpret the diversity of divination media in late antique Egypt.

With Egypt we are, as always, confronted with a crazy abundance of data for ritual diversity, making the culture appear all the more prone to superstition. The various divination procedures examined in this paper did not, however, come randomly from across that “crazy abundance” but clustered around particular cult centers that lasted for centuries. I argue that this clustering of divination media at cult centers shows not the centrifugy with which late antiquity is so often portrayed—the “each-man-a-seer” thesis—but rather a real commitment to cult centers.⁵⁵ It is a cooperative enterprise—between priests and local clients and urban pilgrims—to maintain and extend these centers. Thus, just as much as the media continue to evolve into such hybrids as the Greek *Sortes Astrampsychi*, the centers too revitalize themselves with new gods, new services, and new procedures.

This is not to say that freelance ritual experts did not also set themselves up as rivals to the cult centers, with mobile dream-spells and *Sortes*-books, only that we tend to ignore the astounding creativity that certain cults employed to keep themselves going for centuries

und Christentum im spätantiken Ägypten, Riggisberger Berichte 1 (Riggisberg 1993), 107-8, and Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 66-70, 204-10.

⁵⁴ Paris 129¹⁶, f.76r = Vienna K 9524, 69-70, ed. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Martyrverlegenden*, 169, 173. See Walter E. Crum, “Colluthus, The Martyr and His Name,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 (1929/30): 326. The encomium is credibly attributed to Phoebammon, bishop of Achmim, during Patriarch Theodosius’s exile (mid-VI). On the location of Plewit, see Serge Sauneron, *Villes et légendes d’Égypte*, 2nd ed. (Cairo 1983), 104-7.

⁵⁵ Cf. Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass., and London 1978), and Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Temple and the Magician,” in *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden 1978), 172-89.

after Constantine. It is also not to say that some cults—like that of Isis at Philae—adhered quite stringently to archaic traditions like the processional oracle, only that we tend to assume, as Barb did, a kind of shameless transmogrifying among those cults that *did* change.⁵⁶ We should avoid setting up *our own* culture's wild mantic habits as the model for interpreting the transformations of the Mediterranean world.⁵⁷ For if much of our data for that world suggests values of mobility and transcendence—values that seem to lead conveniently to Christianity—most peoples sought to maintain some sense of a center, and their experts put no limits on the ways—the ritual media—through which those centers could be meaningful.

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⁵⁶ Barque (processional) oracle of Isis at Philae: Priscus fr. 27; Idem Philae 371, ed. F. Ll. Griffith, *Catalogue of the Demotic Graffiti of the Dodecaschoenus* (Oxford 1937), vol. 1, 104-5, 144. See on the continuity of traditional processional oracles, Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 153-56, and on traditional Egyptian culture at Philae, Eugene Cruz-Urbe, "The Death of Demotic at Philae: A Study in Pilgrimage and Politics," in Tamás Bács, ed., *A Tribute to Excellence*, Studia Aegyptiaca 17 (Budapest 2002), 163-84.

⁵⁷E.g., Horst, "Sacred Books as Instant Oracles," 173.

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NECROMANCY GOES UNDERGROUND: THE DISGUISE OF SKULL- AND CORPSE-DIVINATION IN THE PARIS MAGICAL PAPYRI (PGM IV 1928-2144)

CHRISTOPHER A. FARAONE

The practice of consulting the dead for divinatory purposes is widely practiced cross-culturally and firmly attested in the Greek world.¹ Poets, for example, speak of the underworld journeys of heroes, like Odysseus and Aeneas, to learn crucial information about the past, present or future, and elsewhere we hear about rituals of *psychagogia* designed to lead souls or ghosts up from the underworld for similar purposes. These are usually performed at the tomb of the dead person, as in the famous scene in Aeschylus' *Persians*, or at other places where the Greeks believed there was an entrance to the underworld. Herodotus tells us, for instance, that the Corinthian tyrant Periander visited an "oracle of the dead" (*nekromanteion*) in Ephyra to consult his dead wife (5.92) and that Croesus, when he performed his famous comparative testing of Greek oracles, sent questions to the tombs of Amphiaraus at Oropus and Trophonius at Lebedeia (1.46.2-3). Since Herodotus is heavily dependent on Delphic informants for most of Croesus' story, modern readers are apt to forget that there were, in fact, *two* oracles that correctly answered the Lydian king's riddle: the oracle of Apollo at Delphi and that of the dead hero Amphiaraus. The popularity of such oracular hero-shrines increased steadily in Hellenistic and Roman times, although divination by dreams gradually seems to take center stage.²

It is clear, however, that the more personal and private forms of necromancy—especially consultations at the grave—fell into disfavor, especially with the Romans, whose poets repeatedly depict horrible

¹ For a general overview of the Greek practices and discussions of the specific sites mentioned in this paragraph, see A. Bouché-LeClercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, vol. 1 (Paris 1879), 330-343. For a different evaluation of the evidence from that presented here, see Johnston in this volume, 287-92.

² F. Graf, "Magic and Divination," in D.R. Jordan, H. Montgomery and E. Thomassen, eds., *The World of Ancient Magic*, Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4 (Bergen 1999), 295-96.

witches performing graveyard rituals or battlefield ceremonies that involve the handling and interrogation of corpses.³ The Roman authorities, moreover, gradually made certain forms of divination illegal, cracking down first on private ceremonies and itinerant professionals, and then by the mid-fourth century CE specifically restricting nocturnal graveyard visits and necromancy.⁴ In some ways, I think that this negative Roman reaction has affected our own modern views of these practices, for scholars often display a similar embarrassed silence and distaste for necromantic practices, and one sometimes hears that necromancy was not popular in the Greek world at all, but rather more typical of barbarians like the Persians or the more wild members of the Greek family, such as the Thessalians—indeed, some go so far as to say that it was more popular in the literary imagination of the Greeks than in their actual lives.⁵

In what follows, I shall argue that in these later periods necromancy was probably more widespread than is usually supposed, but that it had gone “underground” so to speak to avoid detection by the authorities. In this paper, in fact, I argue that we can see signs of this late-antique concern about the propriety or legality of necromancy in the manner in which the scribes or redactors of the magical papyri seem to hide necromantic rites within other kinds of divinatory recipes or masquerade them in some other form. I have made the first part of this argument elsewhere, with regard to the magical recipes for graveside ceremonies at sunset, which invoke the setting sun to send up for oracular questioning the ghost of the dead person buried in that particular grave.⁶ There I argued in part that scribes or redactors of the

³ E.g. Horace *Satires* 1.8 and Tibullus 1.2.43-50; for discussion, see R. Gordon, “Imagining Greek and Roman Magic,” in B. Ankarloo and S. Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: 2: Ancient Greece and Rome* (Philadelphia and London 1999), 206-208. For Erichtho’s infamous necromantic rites in Lucan’s *Civil War*, see section three of this paper.

⁴ F. Graf, “Magic and Divination,” 285-86 and Gordon, 259-61.

⁵ F. Graf, “Magic and Divination,” 284, is typical: “more-literary-than-real-necromancy.” This is, of course, a reasonable assumption, given the popular literary tradition and the scant archaeological evidence—but it is not clear that such rituals would leave any traces in the archaeological record anyway. One argument has been the relatively little necromancy in the *PGM*, but this can be explained (as I explain it in this essay) by the need to hide or masquerade it as something else.

⁶ C.A. Faraone, “The Collapse of Celestial and Chthonian Realms in a Late Antique ‘Apollonian Invocation’ (PGM I 262-347),” in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly*

spell in question had taken a ritual designed originally to call ghosts up from their graves, stripped away most of the overt signs of its graveside origins and then embedded it in an elaborate spell that asks Apollo to send inspiration down from Olympus. They had, in short, rerouted oracular information from the underworld so that it now appeared to emanate from the heavens above. In this essay, I make a similar argument, but one focusing on a tradition of skull necromancy whose origin—according to one rubric in the Greek magical papyri—was in Thessaly. Like the “sunset spells,” these “skull spells” are surprisingly reticent about describing the graveyard visit or the handling of body parts, for among other ambiguities they employ a unique code-word for the human skull—*skyphos*—a term that everywhere else in Greek literature refers to a “pail” or a “cup.”

In what follows, I shall focus attention on a sequence of recipes for necromancy, which form a continuous unit in the great Paris Magical Papyrus (*PGM IV* 1928-2144). This sequence is punctuated by four rubrics, suggesting that it is comprised of four different recipes, but I shall argue below that what we really have is two longer recipes (1928-2005 and 2006-2144) with the same rubric “Spell of attraction (*agôgê*) of (King) Pitys” (I have labeled them below as “Spells nos. 1 and 2”):

Spell no. 1

PGM IV 1928-2005:

“Spell of attraction (*agôgê*) of King Pitys over any *skyphos*” (a section at the end of the recipe calls it an “interrogation”).

Spell no. 2 (includes all three of the following rubrics)

PGM IV 2006-2125:

“Pitys’ spell of attraction (*agôgê*)” (“... about the interrogation of *skyphoi*”)

PGM IV 2125-2139:

“A restraining seal for *skyphoi* that are not satisfactory (i.e. for divination) and also to prevent (i.e. them from) speaking”

PGM IV 2140-2144:

“Pitys the Thessalian’s spell for the interrogation of corpses (*skênôî*)”

At this point, I wish to point out three shared features of these rubrics:

Realities in Late Antique Religions, Ra’anan S. Boustan and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds. (Cambridge and New York 2004) 213-32.

(i) each of them use rare and concealing terms for the body parts of a corpse: *skyphos* for “skull” in the first three, and *skénos* for “corpse” in the last; (ii) each is focused on the interrogation of a corpse or skull or (in one case) on preventing a skull from speaking; and (iii) the first two rubrics use the general term *agôgê* to refer to the goal of the spell: the word is derived from the verb “to lead” and in the Greek magical handbooks it usually refers to erotic spells designed “to lead” women forcibly to men.⁷ We shall see, however, that here the word *agôgê* must refer to the “leading” of ghosts or souls up from the underworld for a variety of purposes; it seems, in short, to be the handbook equivalent of the word *psychagogia*.⁸

My paper is comprised of three sections and a short conclusion. In the first two sections, I closely examine the two long spells of Pitys concerned with skulls—these are the recipes labeled Spells no. 1 and 2 in the list above. In the third section I survey the other ancient sources, both Greek and Near Eastern, for similar kinds of divination with corpses or skulls and I argue that despite its alleged Thessalian pedigree, these spells originally evolved out of a Mesopotamian and Semitic cultural milieu. In my conclusion, I return to the question of the near invisibility of necromancy in the magical papyri, arguing that these recipes—especially their rubrics—attempt to hide their necromantic contents by employing very obscure, coded or guarded language so as to avoid mentioning any of the objects or locales usually associated with necromancy.

The First Spell of Pitys (PGM IV 1928-2005)

The first recipe is labeled, “Spell of attraction (*agôgê*) of King Pitys over any *skyphos*,” and consists of two invocations to Helios—the first a Jewish-sounding prose prayer to be said at sunrise and the second a version of a popular hexametrical hymn to Helios that is elsewhere used for divinatory purposes. The prose prayer invokes Helios (here probably = Jahweh), his holy angels and a series of magical names, and then begs the god: “Hear me, Mr. so-and-so, and grant me power over *this* violently killed spirit (*pneuma*), from whose *skénos* I hold <this>,”

⁷ C.A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 55-68.

⁸ S. Johnston, *Restless Dead* (Berkeley 1999), 82-123, surveys Greek rituals of *psychagogia*.

in order that I may keep him with me, [Mr. So-and-so,] as a helper and an avenger with regard to any matters that I may desire.”⁹ The purpose of the prayer is obvious: to gain control of a ghost who had died a particularly violent or painful death (*biaiothanatos*) and as such was thought to be more easily available for this sort of manipulation.¹⁰ The language, however, is quite vague and confusing: why are we instructed to ask for “this” spirit? To what spirit precisely does the pronoun “this” refer and what exactly are we to hold from this spirit’s *skênos*?

These same puzzling words are, in fact, repeated a few lines later in the spell in the second invocation: a hexametrical hymn to the same god. Unlike the initial prose prayer spoken at sunrise, this hymn is to be sung at sunset with the idea in mind that the sun, after setting in the west, travels through the underworld during the night to ensure that it will be back in the east where it rises again in the morning. The hymn ends as follows:¹¹

Riding on with gusts on the winds that wander the sky
 O golden-haired Helios, as you conduct your flame’s tireless fire,
 revolving around the great pole in your lofty pathways,
 you yourself are the begetter of all things, which in turn you completely
 dissolve (i.e. into their elements).
 For from you the elements have been arranged according to your laws
 and nourish the whole universe for the year, which is divided into four
 parts.
 Hear blessed one, I call on you who rule heaven
 and earth and chaos and Hades, where dwell
 the ghosts (*daimones*) of men who once gazed on the light.
 O blessed and imperishable one, indeed even now I beg you, master
 of the cosmos:
 If you go into the hollow of the earth in the land of the dead
 send this ghost (*daimona touton*) to me in the middle hours
 of the night in order that he come compelled at your commands,
 (the very ghost) from whose *skênos* this thing (*tode*) comes, and let him
 tell me

⁹ *PGM* IV 1928-1954. The first part of the recipe runs as follows: “His prayer of petition to Helios: Stand facing the east and speak thus: “I call upon you Helios, and your holy angels on this day, in this very hour: preserve me, Mr. NN for I am THENOR and you are my holy angels, guardians of the ARDIMALECHA [list of magical names].”

¹⁰ Johnston, 77-80.

¹¹ *PGM* IV 1968-1980 = *PGM* Hymn 3 (*PGM* vol. 2 pp. 238-40) lines 7-19 and 22-28.

however many things I want in my mind, speaking the entire truth,
gentle, mild, and pondering no thoughts against me.
And may you (i.e. Helios) not be wrathful at my sacred charms,
for you yourself arranged among mortals that they learn about
the threads of the Moirai on your advice.
I call your name, which is in number equal to the Moirai of the seasons(?):
Achaiphôthôthôaiêiaêaiiaêaiêiaôthôthôphiacha.
Be pleased with me, o forefather, scion of the cosmos, self-gendered one,
fire-bearing, gold-gleaming, shining-on-mortals, master of the cosmos,
god (*daimon*) of untiring fire, imperishable, of the golden-circle,
who sends from your rays a pure light to earth.

This hymn is addressed to a solar deity, who is, of course, far more powerful than the relatively minor Greek god Helios, who in late antiquity frequently attracts the powers of Jahweh, Rê, Mithras, Apollo and others, and by so doing appears to be the most important god in the pantheon.¹²

This same hymn, in fact, appears in three other places in the Greek magical handbooks, twice in recipes for divination and once as part of an elaborate erotic spell. The area where these different versions diverge most markedly is in the request to Helios:¹³

Version A: (PGM IV 436-61: “a *philtrokatadesmon*” [a love spell])

If you go into the hollow of the earth in the land of the dead send this ghost (*daimona touton*) to Mr. So-and-so in the middle hours (the very ghost) from whose *skênos* I hold in my hands this remnant (*tode leipsanon*), in order that during the night he come compelled at your commands, and that he may thoroughly perform whatever I want in my mind, all of it, gentle, mild, and pondering no thoughts against me.

Version B: (PGM IV 1957-89: “Spell of attraction of King Pitys over a *skyphos*”)

If you go into the hollow of the earth to the land of the dead send this ghost (*daimona touton*) <to me> in the middle hours of the night in order that he come compelled at your commands, (the very ghost) from whose *skênos* (variant: *kephalê*) I hold this (*tode*), and let him tell me however many things I want in my mind, speaking the entire truth, gentle, mild, and pondering no thoughts against me.

¹² Faraone, “Collapse,” see above, n. 6.

¹³ The variants are conveniently laid out in the *apparatus criticus* of PGM Hymn 3 (see note 11 above).

Version C: (*PGM* VIII 74-81: “Dream Oracle of Besa” [divination])

If you go into the hollow of the earth in the land of the dead, send a truthful prophet (*mantis*) from the innermost part, I beg you.

Version D: (*PGM* I 315-25 and 41-42: “Apollonian Invocation” [divination])

Send this ghost (*daimona touton*) <to me> under my sacred incantations during the night, driven compelled at your commands, (the very ghost) from whose *skênos* this (*todê*) is, and let him tell me however many things I want in my mind, speaking the entire truth, gentle, mild, and pondering no thoughts against me.

In my previous essay, I focused primarily on Version D, an elaborate spell for divination, which assimilates Apollo, Yahweh and Helios and is performed at home while wearing a laurel wreath and other signs of Apollo’s cult. In this version, as you can see, the wording of the request is extremely vague: “send this ghost, the very one from whose *skênos* this thing is.” If this were the only extant version of the hymn, we would have absolutely no idea what the author was talking about. But in the instructions to the fullest version of the same hymn—this is version A, the one used at the end of an aggressive erotic spell—we are told to go to a grave and sing this hymn to Helios, “while holding magical material (*ousia*) from the tomb (*mnemion*).” Since in the peculiar jargon of Greek magical texts the word *ousia* (“stuff” “material”) usually refers to hair, fingernails or threads from the person targeted by a spell,¹⁴ it follows that here it refers to some part of a corpse or its wrappings. This is, in fact, confirmed by the wording of the request used in the spell (version A): “send *this* ghost ... the very one from whose *skênos* I hold in my hands this remnant (*tode leipsanon*).” It is clear that the author of the recipe that contains version A has no scruples about recommending a form of graveside ritual that involves grasping part of the corpse in ones’ hands.

In my earlier paper, I argued that in version D (the Apollonian spell) the redactor or scribe had clearly reconfigured a more traditional “hands-on” version of the spell in order to discard the graveside visit altogether. This also happens in version C, where the hymn is embedded in a spell designed to promote a prophetic dream; as you can see

¹⁴ D.R. Jordan, “*Defixiones* from a Well near the Southwest Corner of the Athenian Agora,” *Hesperia* 54 (1985): 253-55.

the words *daimon* and *skênos* disappear completely and Helios is simply asked: "If you go into the hollow of the earth in the land of the dead, send a truthful prophet (*mantis*) from the innermost part, I beg you." Since the second half of the dream divination recipe that uses version C of the hymn can be traced in part back to very old Egyptian texts from Abydos, which celebrate the god Bes as the guardian of the corpse of the dead Osiris,¹⁵ it seems probable that the mortuary context of Bes' worship at Abydos allowed for the easy syncretism here with the necromantic tradition of hymns to Helios. If we compare the wording of the four variants, we see that Pitys' spell (version B) is most like version D, the divination spell addressed to Apollo that also aims at hiding its necromantic roots: "... the very ghost from whose *skênos* this thing (*todê*) is." In fact, all three of the versions used in divinatory rites are astonishingly vague when compared with version A, where the hymnist calls attention to the fact that he grasps a remnant of the corpse in his hands. Indeed, the version in Pitys' spell was so vague that a later scribe felt compelled to gloss the word *skênos* with the word *kephalê*, and in so doing he has, in fact, decoded the word *skênos* for us, by further identifying it as the "head" of a corpse.

I shall return to the word *skênos* at the conclusion of this paper, but now it is important to discuss the ritual that accompanies the hymn, which is described, as is sometimes the case, at the end of the recipe, albeit very briefly: "After burning armara and uncut frankincense, withdraw (*anachôreîn*).” Here the verb *anachôreîn* might mean "return to your home" as it is translated in the Betz edition, but it is odd that the recipe does not tell us precisely where to perform the spell and where to withdraw to. In this case, however, all we know is that the hymn was probably not sung at home—perhaps we should assume that it took place at a graveyard, but again the ambiguity is quite striking. Note, too, that up until this point in the recipe there has been no mention of the *skyphos* promised in the title of spell. This does not, in fact, happen until the final section (*PGM* IV 1991-2001):

Interrogation (*anakrisis*): Ivy with 13 leaves. Begin on the left side and write on them one by one with myrrh; and wreath the *skyphos* and chant the same words also over it. (Inscribe?) the same inscription (*gramma*) in the forehead (*bregma*) with your own concerns (*tois oikeiois*): [a series of magical names follows].

¹⁵ D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton 1998), 169-74.

The Greek here is not easy. In the Priesendanz and Betz editions of *PGM*, the translations assume that the practitioner crowns himself, but the active form of the verb “to wreath” (*stephanoô*) and the parallels from the next recipe show quite clearly that we are supposed to wreath the *skyphos* with the ivy, chant magical words over it and then inscribe these same words into its “forehead.” What then is this *skyphos*? Outside of these recipes in *PGM* IV the word always means “pail” or “cup,” but here it has a forehead and it can apparently wear a wreath. This is not, of course, so strange, for we know that the Greeks did in fact anthropomorphize two-handled cups or jugs, by calling the handles “ears” and sometimes decorating them with a pair of frontal eyes. A cup, moreover, could conceivably be used in so-called hydromancy or bowl divination, in which a person gazes at water or water mixed with oil in a shallow bowl or cup and predicts the future by describing and then interpreting what they see. Could it be, then, that the word *skyphos* here indeed refers simply to a cup used for such divinatory purposes? In fact, this seems quite unlikely, since there is no other hint of a hydromantic session. Rather it is evident that this *skyphos* must be the thing which the magician holds while singing the hymn to Helios and although there is, as we have seen, a lot of purposeful ambiguity about the word *skênos*, the scribal gloss makes it clear that as we sing the hymn we are to hold something from the “head” (*kephalê*) of the corpse.

In the very last line of this first recipe we are told to make a special ink for inscribing the ivy and skull by mixing serpent’s blood and the soot of a goldsmith. I will return to the ink and this treatment of the skull when I discuss the second recipe of Pitys, which has some very similar preparations, but it suffices to say at this point that this spell does not require a full corpse and could be performed wherever one could set up a skull with an ivy wreath. This final section of the recipe is, moreover, titled the *anakrîsis* or “interrogation,” a word that suggests the skull was eventually asked questions and was presumably expected to reply.

Finally let me point out that although the initial purpose of this spell is to interrogate a corpse in a manner that is consistent with literary necromantic sessions (e.g. of Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11 or Saul and the witch of Endor), this spell clearly imagines that the “interrogation” is only a preliminary step, which can be used as a springboard for a whole array of purposes. Thus, the prose prayer begs for permanent power over the ghost “as a helper and avenger for whatever business

I crave from him,” and the hymn to Helios shows that the ghost will reveal not information about the past, present or future, but rather how he can render service—again, presumably, a wide array of services.

The Second Spell of Pitys (PGM IV 2006-2144):

The second long spell has a similar rubric followed by a fictitious letter from Pitys to King Ostanes (PGM IV 2006-210):

Pitys’ spell of attraction (*agôgê*): Pitys to King Ostanes: Greetings. Since you write to me on each occasion about the interrogation of *skyphoi* (*peri tês tôn skuphôn anakriseôs*), I have deemed it necessary to send you this process as one which is worthy of admiration and able to please you greatly ...

This Ostanes is usually identified as a theologian in the court of the Persian king Xerxes, but in Hellenistic and Roman times his name (like that of Solomon) gets connected with a variety of magical texts—indeed Pliny says that he introduced magic to Greece and that he was known to have written about necromancy in his book on divination (*NH* 30.8 and 14).¹⁶ The name Pitys, on the other hand, is otherwise unknown; it has, however, been suggested quite plausibly that he is the famous Egyptian priest and prophet Bitys mentioned in other texts of this era.¹⁷ This letter makes it quite clear that Ostanes wants to learn “about the interrogation of skulls (i.e. for divination),” but as the recipe continues we see a tension—just as we saw in the first spell of Pitys—between the general all-purpose use of ghosts and the specific necromantic focus implied in the term “interrogation” used in the introductory letter:¹⁸

It attracts (i.e. lovers), lays people low, it sends dreams, it binds people (*katadein*), and it obtains revelation by dreams as well (i.e. for purposes

¹⁶ Gordon, 207, and K. Priesendanz, *RE* sv. “Ostanes.”

¹⁷ K. Priesendanz, *RE* sv. “Pitys (3).” F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Baltimore 1997), 198, suggests that the letter may be a Hellenistic forgery that turns on the tradition that Ostanes brought knowledge of magic with him from Persia to Greece, stopping (Graf suggests) along the way in Thessaly, which was the first to collaborate with the Persians and itself a traditional heartland of magical enterprises.

¹⁸ *PGM* IV 2075-77. The phrase at the end, “the usual things,” *koinologia*, refers (like the more common *ta koina*) to the places in the spell where the practitioner customizes it to fit the circumstances.

of divination). These are the things that this single spell accomplishes. Depending on what you are doing (i.e. for which goal you are performing the spell) alter only the passage with “the usual items.”

As we shall see below, later on the recipe stipulates three variations: one that results in the interrogation of a ghost in person; another in the appearance of a ghost in a dream; and a third in the fetching of a woman for erotic purposes.

The actual recipe begins with instructions on how to paint a magical spell in a special ink on the dried skin of an ass. The incantation itself is primarily composed of nonsensical magical words and vowels, but ends with the following formula addressed to a ghost (*PGM* IV 2031-38):

I adjure (*exorkizō*) you, corpse-daimon (*nekudaimon*) by the powerful and inexorable god and by his holy names, to stand beside me in the coming night in whatever form you used to have, and inform me whether you have the power to perform the so-and-so deed, immediately, immediately; quickly, quickly.

This type of exorcistic incantation is commonly found on Roman-era papyri and *defixiones* used for binding curses and compulsive erotic spells. Kotansky is undoubtedly correct in arguing that it evolved in the first century CE in a Hellenized Jewish community in Palestine or Asia Minor and quickly spread to North Africa and many other corners of the Mediterranean.¹⁹ Normally texts like this one addressed to a “corpse-demon” are deposited in a grave, but in this case the instructions are more precise: the inscribed skin is to be placed under a corpse (*PGM* IV 2039-47):

Then go quickly to wherever <someone> (i.e. a dead man?) lies (i.e. buried?) or wherever something has been discarded, if you do <not> have one lying about; spread the hide under him at about sunset. Return <home> and he (i.e. the ghost of that dead man?) will actually be present and stand beside you on that night. And he describes to you how he died, but first he tells you if he has the power to do anything or to serve you in any way.

As far as I can ascertain this passage may be the only *PGM* recipe to describe the manipulation of a corpse in such a detailed manner, but does it in fact do so? It is, in fact, quite extraordinary that *soma*,

¹⁹ R. Kotansky, “Greek Exorcistic Amulets,” in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden 1995), 243-77.

nekros or *nekus* (the usual words for corpse) or even the vaguer word *skênos* do not appear at all in this passage, which seems to be written in such a guarded or ungrammatical way that its translation is not easy. I follow here the interpretation used in the Preisendanz and Betz translations, but as you can see from the diamond brackets and the parentheses, there is a lot left unsaid here. Note, too, that I have inserted the word “home” after the imperative “return,” just as I did for the verb *anachôrein* in the first spell. But despite the vagueness about the place where the inscribed skin is to be deployed, it is quite clear from the expected narrative of his death that this is a spell designed to force the appearance and speech of a ghost.

There follows another sequence of ritual preparation and invocation that runs parallel to the first one *PGM* IV 2047-67:

And take a leaf of flax and with the black ink that will be revealed to you (i.e. at the end of the recipe) paint on it the figure of the goddess that will be revealed to you (i.e. at the end of the recipe), and paint in a circle this spell and place on his head the leaf which has been spread out and wreath him with black ivy, and he will actually stand beside you through the night in dreams, and he will ask you, saying: “Order what you wish and I do it.” [there follows a series of magical names] I adjure (*exorkizô*) you, corpse-daimon (*nekudaimon*) by the Destiny of Destinies, to come to me, Mr. So-and-so, on this day, on this night and agree to the act of service for me. And if you don’t, expect other chastisements.

This second procedure involves placing an inscribed flax leaf on the corpse’s head and then wreathing it with black ivy, actions which recall, of course, the instructions at the end of the first spell where we were told to wreath the skull with ivy and inscribe its forehead. Here, however, it would appear that we are to do this to a head that is still attached to its corpse—but again the instructions are not absolutely clear. The invocation, moreover, is similar to the first—it addresses a *nekudaimon*, uses the *exorkizô* formula and has a very general request (“agree to the act of service for me”)—but it also adds something new: the threat of chastisements if the ghost does not follow orders.²⁰

The recipe continues (*PGM* IV 2069-74):

²⁰ F. Graf “Prayer in Magic and Religious Ritual,” in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink, eds., *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford 1991), 194-95, discusses the use of “coercive procedures” in the more elaborate *PGM* recipes, if the regular incantation proves ineffective.

When he agrees, rise up immediately and take a roll of hieratic papyrus and write on it in black ink which will be revealed to you (i.e. at the end of the recipe) the figure which will be revealed to you (i.e. at the end of the recipe) and write in a circle this spell and offer it to him and straight away he will attract (i.e. a woman or man for erotic purposes), even if he/she is unmanageable, immediately without delaying a single day.

There follows a third incantation that directs the ghost—here called an “underworld-demon” (*katachthonios daimon*), not a “corpse-demon” (*nekudaimon*)—to bring a women to the practitioner. If the ghost obeys, he will be given sacrifice, if not, he is threatened with unendurable chastisements. The recipe closes with instructions for making the three different inks for the inscriptions and for the three different images to be inscribed, each one presumably within the circular inscription.

This third set of instructions, as it is transmitted in the recipe, is clearly faulty, as it seems to say that the papyrus is to be given to the ghost after he appears in a dream. One cannot, of course, put a rolled sheet of papyri in the hand of a dream-ghost, but one can place it in the hand of a corpse. It would appear, in fact, that at some point in its transmission, three different versions of this technique have been mistakenly recast as three steps to a single and very elaborate magical operation. This is best revealed in the obvious structural parallels between the three sections, which I summarize as follows:

1. *To cause a ghost to appear in person:* (a) *Ritual:* Inscribe an ass' hide with a figure of a lion-faced, fire-breathing man holding a serpent entwined staff and write a circular incantation (around it?). Then go (to a graveyard?) and spread the hide under a corpse(?); (b) *Spell:* Invokes a *nekudaimon* with a long series of magical words and then the *exorkizô* formula; (c) *Ink:* Blood from the heart of a sacrificial ass and the soot of a coppersmith; (d) *Result:* The ghost will appear in person, stand near you and tell of his own death and what services he can perform.
2. *To cause a ghost to appear in a dream:* (a) *Ritual:* Inscribe a flax leaf with the figure of the three-headed Hekate (cow, dog and maiden) holding torches in her six hands and with a circular incantation (around it?). Go to the corpse(?) and place the leaf on its head along with a black ivy wreath. (b) *Spell:* Invokes a *nekudaimon* with a shorter and different series of magical names and then the *exorkizô* formula. Threat added, if the ghost refuses. (c) *Ink:* Blood from a falcon and the soot of a goldsmith; (d) *Result:* The ghost will stand near you in your dreams, and say: “Order what you wish and I do it.”
3. *To cause a ghost to compel a lover to come:* (a) *Ritual:* Inscribe a roll of hieratic papyri with the figure of Osiris, “clothed as the Egyptians

show him” and with a circular incantation (around it?). Give it to the corpse (in his hand?) (b) *Spell*: Invokes an “underworld *daimon*” with no magical names, by citing the authority of Osiris. Sacrifice promised if *daimon* cooperates, threat added if he delays. (c) *Ink*: Blood from an eel and acacia; (d) *Result*: The ghost will attract without delay men or women for erotic purposes.

The parallels between the three parts are, I think, clear, and the placement (in the third version) of the papyrus roll in the hand of the corpse is quite like placing the flax leaf on its head or spreading the skin beneath it: all three actions bring the corpse in bodily contact with the medium on which the spell is inscribed.²¹

There are moreover, some obvious parallels between these three variations and the ritual performed at the end of the first spell of Pitys, which I discussed at the end of the previous section. In order to highlight the similarities, I summarize it here as a fourth variant:

4. *To cause a ghost to help, avenge or speak*: (a) *Ritual*: Inscribe 13 leaves of ivy with an incantation and place it on a skull or the head of a corpse (inscribe its forehead with same formula); (b) *Spell*: Invoke Helios to send up a *pneuma* or a *daimon* from the underworld. (c) *Ink*: Blood from a serpent and the soot of a goldsmith; (d) *Result*: The ghost will serve as helper and avenger; he can be interrogated.

All four of these techniques, then, seem to be the creation of the same person or tradition, but we should note that the third procedure on the chart—the one which uses an inscribed papyrus as medium—differs considerably from the other three versions, which: (i) use animal blood and the soot of a metal worker in the ink, (ii) invoke gods to force the ghost to pay attention; and (iii) aim at the appearance of the ghost who will speak, either in person or in a dream. The third option, however, is heavily Egyptianized, uses acacia instead of metallurgical soot, and it has a very different goal: the erotic subjugation of a woman. It is clearly not part of the original group, but rather a later addition or adaptation of a spell designed originally for necromancy.²²

²¹ The scroll in the hand, moreover, has a very nice parallel in the case of at least one rolled up lead *defixio* that was reportedly found in a grave in Athens in the curled up fingers of a skeleton.

²² F. Graf, *Magic*, 198–200, hypothesizes a very different kind of development (i.e. that all of these spells of Pitys focus on erotic magic by means of a skull) because he understands that the word *agôgê* in the rubric means “erotic spell” as it does elsewhere in the *PGM*. The problem is that the first spell of Pitys has the same rubric, but has nothing to do with erotic seduction; in that spell the term *agôgê* refers to the leading

Two short paragraphs follow this second spell of Pitys, and although both have their own title and are treated by modern editors as separate recipes, I suggest that they are in fact addenda to the second spell. The first paragraph reads as follows (*PGM* IV 2125-39):

Binding seal (*katochos sphragis*) for those *skyphoi* that are unsuitable, and also so that they do not speak or do anything at all of these things (*toutôn*; the papyrus has *toutôi* “in this way”). Seal the mouth of the *skyphos* with the dirt from the doors of (sc. a temple of) Osiris and from mounds (covering) graves. Take iron from a leg fetter, work it cold and make a ring which has a headless lion engraved on it. Let him have, instead of his head, a crown of Isis, and let him trample with his feet a skeleton—the right foot should trample the skull (*kranion*) of the skeleton. In the midst of these should be an owl-eyed cat with its paw on a gorgon’s head (*gorgoneion*); in a circle around them all the names: IADOR INBA NICHAIOPLEX BRITH.

The demonstrative pronoun at the end of the rubric, regardless of whether it is in the genitive plural (*toutôn*) or dative singular (*toutôi*), might conceivably refer to rituals with *skyphoi* that follow in the text, but there are none. The pronoun, however, more obviously refers to the various things that the ghosts are supposed to do in the three variations in the previous recipe. The arrangement of the lion and cat figures within a circular inscription follows, moreover, the same procedure as the three figures described in the longer recipe. Finally, the two sets of images engraved on the iron neatly combine Egyptian and Greek iconography in a manner that focuses attention on skulls and heads:

	<i>Egyptian</i>	<i>Greek</i>
Dirt	from an Osiris temple	from graves
Trampling	lion with Isis crown (Isis?)	owl-eyed cat (Athena?)
Trampled	skeleton’s skull	<i>gorgoneion</i> (Gorgon head)

The trampling of the head in both pictures, when combined with the ritual action of blocking the “mouth” of the *skyphos* with dirt to prevent speech (this amounts to a reburial), leave little doubt that here, too, the word *skyphos* means “skull” not “cup.”

The last of the rubrics associated with Pitys is the only one that identifies him as a “Thessalian” (*PGM* IV 2140-44):

up of the ghost. Graf is correct to say that the final redactor of the spell believed it to be one long (three-part) procedure that culminated in the erotic spell. Perhaps this redactor was misled by the term *agôgê*, which led him to believe erroneously that the whole procedure was erotic.

Thessalian Pitys' interrogation of a *skênos*: On a flax leaf write these things: AZÊL BALEMACHÔ. Ink: [Made] from red ochre, burnt myrrh, juice of fresh wormwood, evergreen and flax. Inscribe (i.e. the leaf) and put it in the mouth (i.e. of the *skênos*).

This brief instruction seems to be a variation on the second part of the long tripartite *agôgê* spell, where we also find instructions for inscribing a flax leaf with a specially prepared ink. In the earlier recipe we were to paint the flax leaf with an image of Hekate encircled by a much longer series of names and then place it on the forehead of the corpse, not in the mouth. Its purpose, moreover, was to induce a dream in which the ghost could be questioned. Here, however, if we understand the rubric literally, we will be able to ask questions and get replies from the mouth of the corpse (*skênos*) itself, an outcome that is implied in the previous addendum, where the mouth of a defective skull is filled with dirt presumably to prevent it from speaking.

There is one other brief recipe for the interrogation of a corpse in the Paris Magical Papyrus: it is buried in a long multipurpose "divine assistance" spell that directly follows the recipes of Pitys and seems to borrow from them (*PGM IV* 2445-2240). The main device used in all the different versions of the spell is an iron lamella inscribed with three verses from the fifth book of the *Iliad* and then ritually consecrated; we are informed that it can be useful for divination in two ways:

Likewise, attach the lamella to someone on the point of death, and he will hear (and presumably respond to) whatever you ask. (2155-56)
Attach it to (i.e. the corpse of) a criminal who has been executed, speak the verses in his ear, and he will tell you everything you wish. (2165-66)

The recipe then closes with a series of special "operations for specific purposes," where, under the rubric "For oracular consultation (*chrêmatismos*)," we find the following:²³

Write the following on a bay leaf in myrrh mixed with the blood of someone who has died violently: "ABRAA, you are the one who reveals all things MARIAPHRAX." Then put it (i.e. the leaf) under the lamella.

²³ *PGM IV* 2207-10. Although the term "oracular consultation" and the use of Apollo's special plant (the bay leaf) point away from the necromantic contexts described in the first part of the recipe, there are no other situations appropriate to divination. The other uses are all amuletic in one way or another: the successful escape of a runaway slave; to break the binding spells of others; to be victorious in racing and games; to get you in the good graces of your superiors; protect you from ghosts and wild animals; and for love spells.

The lamella with inscribed leaf is then presumably attached to the dying or dead man described above, since these are the only two scenarios that are connected in any way with divination.

This procedure—attaching an inscribed leaf to a corpse—is, then, probably also related to the spells of Pitys. Its relationship can be best appreciated if we summarize the various ways that skulls and corpses could be manipulated according to the spells of Pitys:

<i>Lines</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Ink</i>	<i>Placement</i>	<i>Goal</i>
2005-2005	ivy leaves	serpent blood & goldsmith's soot	on head (skull)	"interrogation" (helper/avenger)
2031-47	ass' hide	ass blood & coppersmith's soot	under corpse	ghost appears in person
2047-67	flax leaf	falcon blood & goldsmith's soot	on head (corpse)	ghost appears in dream
2069-74	papyrus	eel blood & acacia	in hand (corpse)	ghost forces woman to come
2140-44	flax leaf	red ochre, burnt myrrh, and other vegetable matter	in mouth (skull)	"interrogation"
2155-66 & 2207-10	bay leaf	blood of a violently killed man and myrrh	talk into ear attach to corpse	"he will speak" (in person)

There is, then, a consistent pattern throughout all of these spells of Pitys in the Paris Magical Papyrus, one which suggests a common origin. All but the fourth (the papyrus in hand) seem to focus generally on the head or mouth of the dead man and at least preliminarily on forcing his ghost to speak in a context that implies prophecy, although it is clear that this initial purpose could be expanded indefinitely so that the ghost becomes a permanent assistant, if the practitioner so wishes. It is also important to stress that in the third example (flax leaf on head) a visitation in a dream could replace one in person, since in other traditions of skull-necromancy, as we shall see, learned men debated whether the skull itself actually spoke or whether the ghost's voice was only heard in the head of the practitioner.

The Origins and History of Skull Divination in the Ancient Mediterranean Basin

We have seen, then, how all of these spells of Pitys are concerned (in one way or another) with the manipulation and interrogation of skulls or corpses with the goal of getting the ghost to speak to and in

some cases act on behalf of the practitioner. Did the Greeks really believe that a skull or a corpse could speak? To what degree can we corroborate the use of such rituals in the Greco-Roman world? And is there, in fact, a real Thessalian source of these recipes? Thessaly is, of course, the home and wellspring of magic according to many classical literary sources. It is to wild Thessaly that Medea and other sorceresses go to gather their most potent herbs and it is there that Lucius has his famous meeting with the witch Pamphile in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*. Thessaly is not, however, especially well known for necromancy, with one notable—one might even say infamous—exception.

The Roman poet Lucan describes how a Thessalian witch named Erichtho performs an elaborate and ghastly ritual to revive the corpse of a Roman soldier so she can force him to tell her and her client Sextus Pompey what the future will bring.²⁴ Given my broader thesis about the role of Roman authorities in curtailing graveside necromancy, it is important to note how Lucan sets up the scene in stark contrast to what he and presumably his audience deem to be more legitimate forms of divination (6: 424-34):

But he (i.e. Sextus Pompey) sought not the tripods of Delos nor the caverns of Delphi; he cared not to inquire what sound Dodona makes with the cauldron of Jupiter ... he asked not who could read the future by means of entrails or interpret birds, or watch the lightnings of heaven and investigate the stars with Assyrian lore—he sought no knowledge which, though secret, is permissible. To him were known the mysteries of cruel witchcraft which the gods above abominate, and grim altars with funeral rites; he knew the veracity of Pluto and the shades below; and the wretch was convinced that the gods of heaven were ignorant.

It would appear, then, that visits to the oracular shrines of Apollo or specialists learned in interpreting signs or even Babylonian-style astrologers were acceptable to Lucan and his audience, but necromancy was not.

Sextus Pompey, in fact, visits Erichtho, who lives among the tombs and graves as an expert in the rituals of Hades (510-15) and snatches parts of corpses from funeral pyres and crucifixions (533-87). We hear how she takes the corpse of a recently slain Roman soldier (637ff.), pours a potion on it and invokes the underworld gods to allow the ghost to return and predict the future (716-18). The ghost of the dead

²⁴ *Civil War* 6.424-830. See Graf, *Magic*, 190-204, for a detailed discussion.

man appears, reanimates his old body (72-59) and tells of future events (779 ff.). Lucan's description is, of course, completely over the top, but Erichtho's actions do conform in many of the details to the recipes of the Greek magical papyri, which invoke the gods of the underworld to send up a spirit.²⁵ Although both have the same ultimate goal of interrogating a corpse and both use the somewhat rare device of a second, coercive procedure if the first one fails,²⁶ the spells of the Thessalian witch (Erichtho) and those of the alleged Thessalian king (Pitys) differ considerably. Erichtho pours potion over the entire corpse, whereas Pitys' recipes focus primarily on the head and mouth. She prays to Persephone and Pluto to force the ghost to appear, while he recommends asking the sun-god Helios to send up a ghost while on his nightly trip through the underworld.

This last feature of Pity's spell, which recalls the nightly journey of the Egyptian sun-god Rê, when combined with Pity's alleged identity with the legendary Egyptian sage Bitys suggests an Egyptian, rather than Thessalian source for these rituals. And in fact, another Roman author of roughly contemporaneous date suggests precisely this. In his *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius tells us how a peripatetic Egyptian prophet in Thessaly revives the corpse of a young man who had died mysteriously. The dead man's uncle proposes that they allow this prophet to help them discover the murderer:²⁷

"There is a man here named Zatchlas, an Egyptian prophet of the first rank, who has already contracted with me for a great price to bring my nephew's spirit back from the dead for a brief time and reanimate his body as it was before his death." At this point he (i.e. the uncle) introduced a young man dressed in long linen robes and wearing sandals woven from palm leaves. His head was completely shaven....

Apuleius describes what happens next:

The prophet placed a certain little herb on the corpse's mouth and another on its chest. Then he turned to the east and silently invoked the rising power of the majestic Sun.

²⁵ C.A. Faraone, "The Ethnic Origins of a Roman-Era *Philtrokatadesmos* (PGM IV 296-434)," in P. Mirecki & M. Meyer, eds., *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (Leiden 2002), 319-43.

²⁶ See Graf, *Magic*, 190-94, on the fearful *carmen secundum* of Erichtho. The same idea shows up in the second spell of Pitys, e.g. in this threat addressed to the ghost: "... agree to the act of service for me. And if you don't, expect other chastisements" (PGM IV 2067).

²⁷ *Metamorphoses* 2.28; translations are by J. A. Hanson (1989).

Soon the corpse begins to breathe and stands up, but he refuses to speak. At this, the prophet gets angry and threatens him with torments, and in the end he describes how he died (ch. 29). The narrative is similar in different ways to the recipes of Pitys: in the first one, we are directed to pray to Helios at sunrise and later put an ivy leaf and an inscription on a skull; in the second variation on the recipe a flax leaf is placed on the corpse's head and he is later threatened if he will not tell how he died; and in the last variation of the ritual—the one designed “for questioning corpses,” we are told to inscribe a flax leaf and put it in the mouth of the corpse.²⁸

This anecdote about Zatchlas suggests that the prayer to the sun, the placement of leaves, and the interrogation of a corpse in this manner would all be recognizable to Apuleius' readers as an Egyptian specialty. We can draw the same inference from the appearance of the similar spells of Pitys in the Paris Magical Papyrus, which was unearthed in Upper Egypt and was apparently the work of native priests working in or near Thebes. There is, however, little or no evidence that native Egyptians ever practiced necromancy of this sort prior to the Roman period.²⁹ Why, then, were such rituals apparently so well known in Egypt and co-opted by Egyptians in the imperial period as part of their exotic self-representation?³⁰ To understand this we need to trace the history of such spells prior to their arrival in Egypt. There are, in fact, two earlier Greek tales about talking or singing heads, but scholars have connected neither with rituals or ceremonies like those described by Apuleius or the PGM recipes. According to one tradition, for instance, Orpheus's head, after he had been dismembered by the Thracian women, floated down the Hebrus river and continued to sing or prophesy; the story shows up on red-figure Attic pots and Philostratus tells us that it floated all the way to Lesbos, where “in a hollow spot in the earth (i.e. a cave) it used to sing prophecies.” This

²⁸ P. Grimal, “Le calame égyptien d'Apulée,” *REA* 73 (1971): 343-55, argues unpersuasively that Zatchlas' ritual imitates two well-known Egyptian rites of great antiquity: the opening of the mouth ritual used to vivify mummies and statues and the ritual union with the sun-disk. The problem is that neither of these rituals ever aims at getting the mummy to speak prophetically or otherwise.

²⁹ Grimal, 346: “la nécromancie n'apparaît guère en Égypte, sinon très tardivement et en marge de la religion officielle.” See also Schmidt, 121-43, and Frankfurter, 235.

³⁰ Frankfurter, 225-33.

cave, Philostratus tells us, became famous among the Aeolian Greeks and their Ionian neighbors, and oracles sung by Orpheus' head were sent "even to Babylon."³¹ Aelian, on the other hand, tells the bizarre tale of the Spartan king Cleomenes, who swore an oath to his friend and confidant Archonides that he would always act with his (i.e. Archonides') counsel (literally "with his head"). When Cleomenes seizes the throne, however, he has Archonides killed and his head preserved in a pot of honey. Thereafter, whenever he was about to do something of importance, he would bend over the pot and announce his intentions to the head and thus avoid breaking his oath, since he was "consulting with Archonides' head."³² Both stories suggest that prophetic heads or skulls may have been consulted in the pre-Hellenistic Greek world, but the witnesses are late (Aelian and Philostratus), and although there seems to have been some kind of popular Orphic oracle connected in historical times with a prophetic head in a cave on Lesbos, no prayers or rituals are mentioned by which we might profitably compare this practice with those of Zatchlas or the *PGM*. Therefore, chances of a Greek origin are, like the Egyptian, quite remote.

As it turns out, the earliest specific reference to the use of skulls in divination is in a recipe attested in two similar Mesopotamian texts, which date to the first millennium BCE.³³ These fragmentary texts first stipulate the burning of juniper and sulphur in a censer and the preparation of a special salve that is rubbed onto the eyes before the sun-god Shamash, who is referred to in the incantation and then addressed directly:³⁴

... may he (i.e. Shamash) bring up a ghost from the darkness for me!
May he [put life back(?)] into the dead man's limbs! I call [upon you], O
skull of skulls: may he who is within the skull answer [me!] O Shamash,
who brings light in (lit. "opens") the darkne[ss]!

³¹ T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 724-25. Philostratus *Heroicus* 306 (= Kaiser, 172). For full discussion, see Faraone, "Orpheus' Final Performance: Necromancy and a Singing Head on Lesbos," *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica* 97 (2004): 5-27.

³² Aelian *Varia Hist.* 12.8.

³³ I.L. Finkel, "Necromancy in Ancient Mesopotamia" *AJO* 29 (1983-84): 1-17; B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 11 (Tübingen 1994), 216-19; and J. Scurlock, "Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia" (Diss. University of Chicago 1988), nos. 72-74 and nos. 79-82.

³⁴ Finkel, 9.

The ritual involves the preparation of a paste made from crushed animals and other ingredients, which is to be applied to one or all of three items: a figurine of the “ghost,” a second item (lost in a lacuna), and a skull. The recipe closes with the prediction: “... and when you call upon him he will answer you.” Although apparently three different items could be used to connect the necromancer with the ghost, it is clear from the incantation quoted above (“O skull of skulls”) that in this recipe at least a skull is the preferred item.

It is a pity that this is the sole evidence for skull necromancy among the cuneiform texts, since it appears that this Mesopotamian procedure has much in common with the spells of Pitys for skull-divination. Like Helios in the first of the *PGM* spells, the sun-god Shamash, who nightly visits the underworld, is asked to bring up a ghost to re-invigorate a corpse or a skull so that it can speak.³⁵ The ghost, moreover, is then addressed directly and asked to identify itself, similar to the biographical information requested of the ghost in the second of the two *PGM* recipes, where we are told that the ghost will tell how he died. In any event it seems clear that the Mesopotamian spell is designed to get a ghost to re-inhabit a skull, so it can be asked questions and give replies. A similar use of skulls is documented in a handful of other Mesopotamian procedures for the exorcism of hostile ghosts: the practitioner addresses the ghost directly while standing before a skull, which at the end of the rite “you return from the place where you got it.”³⁶ Here, too, the skull provides contact with the ghost, who is presumably transported along with the skull back to its grave; this same idea lies, of course, in the short spell of Pitys for restraining presumably defective *skyphoi* (i.e. who will not stop speaking) by filling their mouths with dirt from a grave mound.

Some may, of course, balk at the idea that a Mesopotamian spell could survive a millennium or so and turn up in a late-antique Greek magical handbook in Upper Egypt, but there is evidence that a collection of similar Mesopotamian necromantic spells was being recopied down until the early classical period. A Late-Babylonian cuneiform tablet from Uruk dated archaeologically to the 4th-3rd century BCE does not mention skulls *per se*, but it does prescribe the same kinds of ointments to be used on either a figurine of the ghost or the face of

³⁵ Schmidt, 217 n. 372 anticipates me in this observation.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

the practitioner.³⁷ All of these spells, moreover, focus tightly on getting the ghost to speak and provide information regarding important decisions—i.e. they are classic necromantic rites:³⁸

- no. 79: “Let the *namtaru* (= ghost) speak On the (figurine of the) *namtaru* rub the oil and whatever and however much you ask him (i.e. the *namtaru*), he will tell you.”
- no. 80: “Incantation to get a man’s *namtaru* to talk Your face you rub (with the oil) and you can question him (i.e. the *namtaru*), he will speak to you.”
- no. 81: “Recite the incantation three times and then let the ghost make a decision for you. If it is silent and cannot be loosed, you perform the NAMBURBI ritual.”

The last text is of further interest because it seems similar to Erichtho’s rite and those in the *PGM*, where a second, stronger spell is suggested or threatened if the first does not succeed.

Recent studies have revealed in other areas the strong possibility of a direct link between the Mesopotamian magical recipes and those which survive in the Greek Magical Papyri.³⁹ Various comments in the Mishnah show, moreover, that divination by skulls undoubtedly survived among the post-exilic Jews down into the late-antique period.⁴⁰ The Tractate Sanhedrin of the Babylonian Talmud, for example, discusses two kinds of necromancer: “both him who conjures up the dead by means of soothsaying, and one who consults skulls.” A medieval commentary provides further details about the skull-diviner: “He takes the skull of a dead person after the flesh has decomposed and he offers incense to it, and asks it of the future and it (i.e. the skull) answers.” Some rabbis dismiss this as outright chicanery, as does Hippolytus, the 4th-century CE bishop of Rome, in his diatribe against the charlatans of his day.⁴¹ But when Maimonides in his commentary on the Mishnah describes a similar ceremony from his own day, he reveals that there were serious rabbinic debates over whether the skull

³⁷ E. von Wieher, *Späthabylonische Texte aus Uruk 2* (Berlin 1983), tablet no. 20 = Scurlock, recipes nos. 79-82.

³⁸ These are selections from the translations of Scurlock, recipes nos. 79-81.

³⁹ C. A. Faraone, “The Mystodokos and the Dark-Eyed Maidens: Multicultural Influences on a Late-Hellenistic Incantation,” in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Religions of the Graeco-Roman World 129 (Leiden 1995), 297-333 and idem, *Love Magic*, 36-38.

⁴⁰ I follow Finkel here and give his translations.

⁴¹ Hippolytus *Refutation of All Heresies* 4.41.

really speaks or whether the voice simply appears in the mind of the necromancer—a variation that we see in the second recipe of Pitys that allows the ghost to speak to the practitioner in a dream.

It should be clear by now, that by the time of the compilation of the two *PGM* spells discussed here, techniques designed to force corpses or skulls to speak or prophesy were probably known and used by different kinds of practitioners in Palestine, Egypt and other parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Although Pitys is called a Thessalian in one of the *PGM* rubrics, it seems most likely that his name is a corruption of Bitys, an Egyptian famous for his magical repertoire. In other words, in *PGM IV*, an elaborate magical handbook copied and used in upper Egypt in the late fourth century CE, a legendary Egyptian sage is presented as a Thessalian and then claimed as the author of a recipe that originated in Mesopotamia and was then probably transmitted to Egypt by Jews! This is, in fact, the reversal of the situation in the anecdote from Apuleius, where we find the Egyptian priest Zatchlas performing what we infer to be his own native ritual of corpse interrogation in Thessaly. This brief history of skull-necromancy spells shows quite clearly, however, that from their earliest manifestations in Mesopotamia they were connected with a hymn to a sun god who is descending at sunset to the underworld and they were focussed quite narrowly on getting the ghost to speak for prophetic or consultative purposes. By the time these types of spells show up in the 4th century CE Paris Magical Papyrus, these recipes are being used for other purposes beyond divination, but we can nonetheless see that they, too, are still greatly concerned with forcing the head and mouth of a corpse or skull to speak.

Conclusions: Hiding Necromantic Skulls in PGM IV

In an earlier study, I suggested that the use of the somewhat obscure word *skénos* to mean “corpse” and other oddities in a divinatory spell were clearly designed to relocate an old necromantic ritual away from the graveyard and to hide its origins, by inserting it into a ritual that on its face evokes oracular inspiration from Apollo and the Jewish god Yahweh, both of whom are assimilated to Helios. The word *skénos* is, in fact, extremely interesting in this regard, as it seems to have had a somewhat limited use in Greek. It was apparently a poetic word for “corpse,” showing up in a dozen or so sepulchral epigrams mostly of

Roman date, where it usually appears as the first word in a hexameter, just as it does in the “Hymn to Helios” used in one of the spells of Pitys. The earliest extant use of it in poetry, as far as I can tell, is in a late Classical or early Hellenistic poem inscribed on a tombstone found near Boeotian Thebes; nearly all of the later poetic examples are of Roman date.⁴² The word does, however, show up much earlier in Greek philosophic writers like Democritus, Timaeus and Plato, who use it most often—as do the epitaphs—to draw a contrast between the body that dies and the soul that does not die. It is clearly related etymologically to the word *skênê*, and it apparently designates the body as the “tent” which covers or contains the soul. The stem for both words, however, has recently been traced to a semitic verb (*sh-k-n*) “to dwell” and a related noun (*ma-shkan*) “tent” or “tabernacle,” leaving open the possibility for a Semitic source for both the word and the idea. By the late Hellenistic and Roman periods it is a word used regularly by some Neoplatonic and Christian writers, but it is not very common. In fact, it appears only six times in all of the *PGM*: four times in the different versions of the hymn to Helios and twice in Pitys’ recipe for the interrogation of corpses. Is it, then, part of a coded or secret vocabulary used by Greco-Egyptian magicians to conceal illicit necromantic rites? Perhaps, but since the word was apparently well enough known among some segments of the educated Hellenized elite in the late fourth-century CE, it seems excessive to call it a codeword. In my previous essay, I suggested, rather, that the word *skênos* was useful precisely because of its ambiguity, which allowed scribes and redactors to keep using a popular necromantic hymn to Helios, but to rework the language of it so that if necessary all of the overt references to corpses and graveyards could be made to disappear.

In the case of the skull spells discussed here, however, I have a much stronger suspicion that the scribes or redactors are consciously attempting to hide these necromantic rituals. This is especially obvious in the highly unusual use of the word *skyphos* to mean “skull”—a usage that is limited entirely to the recipes of Pitys that I have discussed here. There is only one close linguistic parallel, and this one is also limited

⁴² The Hellenistic stone from Thebes is Kaibel *Epigrammata Graeca* no. 502. All the other stones in his corpus which use the word *skênos* are of Roman date or later: nos. 97, 226, 250, 422, 502 and 711.

to an educated elite: the use of the diminutive *skyphion* by later medical writers to mean “skull” or parts of the skull. Is *skyphos*, then, used in the *PGM* as a special code-word? I think so and for two reasons: (i) its second meaning “skull” is so restricted that the learned Athenaeus, who devotes several pages of discussion to the word *skyphos* and in the process quotes and discusses numerous regional uses of the word, never mentions the fact that it can mean “skull” (*Deipn.* 498a-500c); and (ii) of its five appearances in the magical papyri (all in the recipes of Pitys) the word is used twice in the rubric of a spell and once in an introductory letter to a spell. But in all three cases it does not appear in the recipe itself—a sure sign, I should think, that a scribe or redactor is trying to re-label a traditional recipe as something new. One cannot help wondering, therefore, if these coded rubrics—along with the extremely vague descriptions that we noted earlier of the site and materials of the ritual itself—were deployed to deceive the eyes of inquisitive Roman administrators, who perhaps would only scan the rubrics of a handbook. To most of us, such state intervention probably sounds out of place in the ancient world, but it is perhaps helpful to recall that occupied Egypt was also the scene in 210 BCE when Ptolemy Philopater decreed that all those who performed private Dionysiac initiations in his country should travel to Alexandria and (among other things) file a copy of their sacred texts (*hieroi logoi*) with the government.⁴³ Nearly four centuries later, Q. Aemilius Saturninus, the prefect of Egypt, promulgated a law (apparently within Egypt alone) that made it a capital offense to use oracles or to practice divination,⁴⁴ and by the mid-fourth century we find clear and consistent evidence for similarly strong legal sanctions against graveside rituals. Ammianus, for instance (19.12.14) tells of a law of Constantius the Second which says in part: “If anyone ... was accused of ... having passed a tomb in the evening, supposedly collecting the horrible contents of graves and the empty illusions of ghosts that wander about in these places, he was condemned on a capital charge and executed.” The Theodosian Code reports similar rulings from the middle of the fourth century that attempt to ban nocturnal sacrifices and incantations performed for demons. In general, the Romans in this period worried over the

⁴³ W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 70-72.

⁴⁴ R. Ritner, “Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and their Religious Context,” *ANRW* 2.18.5 (1995): 3355-56.

close contact between divination and magic, especially when they intersected in necromantic spells that forced ghosts to appear and tell the future.⁴⁵

It would be difficult to argue, however, that the final redactor of the Paris Magical Papyrus (*PGM IV*) was overly concerned with the Roman crackdown on private necromancy, since it was probably composed and perhaps even copied once or twice in Upper Egypt, an area of weak Roman control.⁴⁶ There are, moreover, other examples of spells in this papyrus which do not shy away from detailed and unambiguous descriptions of graveside ceremonies: for example the erotic compulsion spell (*PGM IV* 299 ff.) discussed earlier which uses Version A of the necromantic Hymn to Helios—the version that is the most explicit in its instructions to go to a grave and grasp a part of the corpse while intoning the hymn. And even within the spells of Pitys, we have seen that one of the later scribes, presumably in Upper Egypt, felt the necessity to “decode” his predecessor’s obscure reference to *skénos* with the gloss “head” (*kephalê*). The Greek magical handbooks, however, collect spells that are at the end of a scribal tradition that in some cases is half a millennium old and preserves recipes that were originally written down or collected in areas of lower Egypt or elsewhere along the Mediterranean basin. I noted above that the spells of Pitys clearly make up a discrete block of text within *PGM IV*, one which was probably excerpted from a source different from the spells that surround it. Is it, then, too radical to suggest that the original redactor of this section of the handbook lived in an area of Egypt or the Mediterranean where Roman influence was much more keen and that he coded the rubrics of his spells and obscured the graveside necromantic instructions because he feared official Roman intrusion into his own occult world? If this were the case, it would help explain why at a later period and in a place in Upper Egypt far removed from Roman meddling, a copyist was inclined to add the gloss “head” (*kephalê*) to his exemplar to explain the guarded language of the scribe that originally composed the necromantic spells of Pitys, King of the Thessalians.

⁴⁵ R. Gordon, “Imagining Greek and Roman Magic,” in B. Ankarloo and S. Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: 2: Ancient Greece and Rome* (Philadelphia and London 1999), 249-65.

⁴⁶ Frankfurter, 23-27.

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DELPHI AND THE DEAD

SARAH ILES JOHNSTON

In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*,¹ the chorus describes how Apollo wrested control of the Delphic Oracle away from Earth. The feat was neither easy nor quick: after Apollo's initial victory, Earth retaliated by breeding a race of ghosts (*phasmata*), who prophesied by visiting people in their dreams. His dignity impaired, Apollo sought the help of his father, and Zeus struck mute the spectral "voices of night." Forever after, those who sought prophecies would do so at Delphi under the enlightened patronage of Apollo.

With these words, Euripides offers a ghostly twist on a myth known at least as early as Pindar, whereby Apollo had to battle Earth for his Oracle.² But with that twist Euripides might also have been playing, somewhat ironically, on a familiar characteristic of Delphic oracles in the real world. For Delphic Apollo himself knew a lot about what the ghosts of the dead were up to and frequently conveyed that knowledge to the living, thus serving as mediator between the two realms. Fifty-four of our 519 extant oracular responses from Delphi—10.4%—concern the dead. This exceeds the number of responses concerning colonization—the topic most famously connected with the Delphic Oracle—which comprises 39 oracles, or just 7.5%. Matters of war comprise about 6.5%. Gnostic utterances comprise just over 7%. In fact, no reasonably circumscribed topic comes close to comprising the 10.4% that oracles concerning the dead do.³ Clearly, how the dead were faring and what they were doing were matters of importance to those who made inquiries at Delphi, and Apollo helped them to find out. Why did he take on this role?

¹ Eur. *IT* 1259-82.

² See C. Sourvinou-Inwood, "Myth as History: The Previous Owners of the Delphic Oracle," in J. Bremmer, ed., *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London 1987), 215-41.

³ One that J. Fontenrose dubbed "cult foundations" comprises 78 out of 519 oracles, or 15%, but it is very broad, and overlaps with the category of oracles concerned with the dead, insofar as some oracles advocate founding cults to them (*The Delphic Oracle: its Responses and Operations with a Catalogue of Responses* [Berkeley 1978], 25, etc.).

The Corpus of Oracles

Answering this question will tell us more, in the long run, not only about Delphic Apollo, but also about one of the important roles that divination plays in a society. But answering it first requires a closer look both at the ways in which the living and the dead interacted in archaic and classical Greece and at the way in which I am using our corpus of extant Delphic oracles. I will begin with the latter topic, and start by clarifying two matters.

My rubric “oracles concerning the dead” can be divided into three types. Most common is the type in which a city or individual is suffering some trouble—plague, famine, infertility or crop failure—and is told by Delphic Apollo that the problem arises from the anger of one or more of the dead. The oracle prescribes rituals through which the anger of the dead can be appeased and the problem, therefore, be solved. Examples are an oracle given to Corax, the murderer of Archilochus, which told him to appease the soul of Archilochus with libations (#1 in my appendix); one given to the Agyllaioi, which told them to propitiate the Phocaeans to end a plague in their city (#5); and one telling the Spartans to appease Pausanias’ ghost by burying his body and setting up two statues of him in front of Athena’s temple (#8). Twenty-eight out of the 54 oracles concerning the dead (slightly more than 50%) are of this type. A second type calls for establishment of cult to a dead person or persons without any explicit mention of their anger and the problems it causes for the living. For example, an oracle commanded the inhabitants of Metapontum to found a cult to Aristeeas after his ghost had appeared there (#31) and another ordered the Delphians to establish cult to Pindar (#35). Seven are of this type. A third type, of which there are 17 examples, comprises oracles that tell a city how they should treat a dead person’s remains. The most famous of these are the oracles instructing the Athenians to retrieve Theseus’ bones (#40) and the Spartans to retrieve Orestes’ bones (#37 and #38). Other examples prohibit mistreatment of the remains or designate their proper burial place; thus one oracle forbids Cleisthenes from casting Adrastus’ remains out of Sicyon (#36) and another tells the Heraklids where to bury Alcmena (#47).

There is overlap amongst my three types. Some of the type 3 oracles either were delivered when a city asked Delphi how they could stop a plague, or included promises that proper treatment of the remains would prevent future city-wide disasters; thus they could just as easily

be placed into type 1 as type 3. And we must suspect that even when it is not overtly stated in what remains to us, establishment of cult to a dead individual (type 2) sometimes was motivated by disaster such as plague or famine. These points suggest that if we had fuller evidence, most of my 54 oracles would fall into type 1—in other words, that most oracles prescribing special treatment of the dead were delivered to an individual or a city that was suffering from a problem that Delphi traced to the anger of the dead. But be that as it may, what all 54 of these oracles clearly share is the fact that in them, Apollo advises enquirers to adjust the relationship between the living and the dead by performing some sort of action. Maintaining good relationships between the living and the dead, then, was one of Delphic Apollo's dominant concerns.⁴

The second matter I need to clarify concerns how we should study our extant Delphic oracles in general. My approach differs from that of Joseph Fontenrose, the most recent scholar to have treated them in depth, on two points. First, although I agree with him that some oracles are certainly not historical—for example, the oracle ordering Alcmaeon to find a land that didn't exist when he slew his mother if he wished to escape the Erinyes who were pursuing him (#12), or the oracle instructing Pelias to bring the Golden Fleece home from Colchis in order to bring home and thus appease the ghost of

⁴ Two of the oracles that I am including under my rubric do not fall easily in any of my types, although each can be understood as a variation of one of them. The first case is that of the Cyrenean purification laws, sanctioned by Delphi in about 330 BCE (# 53 in my appendix). The laws include, among other things, elaborate instructions for dealing with ghostly visitants who cause problems: the sufferer was instructed to make statues of them and then treat those statues to a feast before depositing them in an unworked forest—that is, in a place where the living would not come into contact with them. This is not, in essence, different from other oracles in which the living are told how to cure problems caused by the dead, except insofar as the Cyrenean prescription is presented as valid for all cases. In the other oracle, Apollo tells the Athenians to sacrifice to various gods and the Hero Archegetas, and to fulfill their customary duties to the dead (#54). The oracle followed upon a portent that the Athenians had seen in the sky. In this case, Apollo advises no new cult to the dead, which distinguishes this oracle from others in types one and two. The accompanying advice to sacrifice to so many gods and the Hero also sets it apart; in many of our other examples, the inquirer is told to propitiate one god in addition to the dead individual, but never a large group. This is, of the two cases, the least like any other oracle involving the dead and possibly should be excluded from my category, leaving us with 53 instead of 54 examples (and thus making the percentage of oracles concerned with the dead 10.2% instead of 10.4%).

Phrixus (#52)—nonetheless, I am not as sanguine as Fontenrose was about always being able to separate the chaff from the wheat. One of Fontenrose's primary means of dividing legendary (that is, fictive) from historical (that is, real) responses was to study their modes of language. Yet, even if an oracle becomes narratively embroidered so as to change its mode, a real oracle may lie at its core—how can one be sure that the Athenians never actually received an oracle telling them to bring home Theseus' bones, for example, just because the sources that convey the oracle present it in the language of direct command (which Fontenrose associates with legendary responses) rather than that of sanction (which he associates with historical responses)? Another method that Fontenrose used to separate historical oracles from legendary was simply to ask whether the oracle had been recorded by a city-state or some other group in an official manner—for example, whether it had been inscribed in stone, as were the Cyrenean purification laws that Delphi sanctioned (#53). But I would question whether all “real” oracles necessarily were so carefully recorded and also whether, indeed, all recorded oracles were recorded in exactly the same language as they were delivered—an assumption on which Fontenrose's arguments about modes of language depends. Finally, I would note that we have no reason to assume that fiction presented a significantly different picture of what sorts of things Delphi was concerned with than did reality.

This brings us to what Fontenrose called “topic:” that is, once he had identified a corpus of what he thought were “real” historical oracles, he then used the topics of those oracles as a standard by which to judge whether other oracles were historical or legendary. Or to put it differently, I am not sure what we should count as wheat and what as chaff in this debate, or even whether there is any chaff. Can we not learn just as much about what Delphi signified within the ancient mentality from the so-called legendary responses as we can from the historical?⁵

My second reason for discarding Fontenrose's divisions is that, even if I did observe them, they would not significantly change the picture I am presenting in this essay. Let us temporarily divide all oracles into two groups that reflect his guidelines. One group will include those

⁵ Cf. the remarks of Pritchett, *The Greek State at War* (Berkeley 1979), 3: 301-2, n. 22.

that he called historical and also those quasi-historical ones that he thought were likely to be genuine. The other group will include those that he called legendary and also those quasi-historical ones that he thought were unlikely to be genuine. When we calculate how large a percentage oracles concerning the dead represent in each group, we arrive at 8.5% for the first group and 11.5% for the second—a difference of three percentage points, which is not enough, for my purposes, to worry about.

Necromancy in Archaic and Classical Greece?

I can now return to the question with which I began: why did the living ask Delphic Apollo to clarify problems caused by the dead and then suggest solutions for them?

To answer this, we first have to understand why a mediator between the living and the dead was necessary at all, which means contextualizing the question within our knowledge of how the living and the dead interacted in ancient Greece, and particularly looking at Greek necromancy. As I have discussed in depth elsewhere, during the early archaic period, the Greeks did not seem particularly concerned about problems that the dead might cause—the dead, in fact, weren't considered a source of such problems to begin with. But as time went on, both the incursion of foreign ideas and techniques and changes within Greek culture itself led to increased fear of the dead and increased anxiety about how the dead themselves were faring—the two things are related, of course, insofar as unhappy dead make their unhappiness felt among the living. This led in turn, among other things, to the emergence of specialists who claimed expertise in controlling the dead and addressing their problems: *goêtes* and *psychagôgoi*, to use two of the most common terms.⁶

Part and parcel of the relatively late and never wholly enthusiastic development of interaction between the living and the dead in Greece is the lack of real necromantic rituals in archaic and classical Greece, and the only occasional appearances of necromancy in fictionalizing narratives of the periods. Although people did engage in rituals

⁶ S.I. Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley 1999), esp. Chap. 3.

designed to send ghosts against their enemies (through curse tablets, for instance) and did perform rituals to get rid of ghosts who were troubling them (as *psychagōgoi* did for the Spartans, for example, when Pausanias' ghost was haunting Athena's temple⁷), they seem to have had no desire to call ghosts back into the upper world, even in order to obtain information that they would not otherwise have—that is, they had no desire to perform necromancy.⁸ A brief analysis of the most important evidence that has been used to argue otherwise will demonstrate this point.⁹

The earliest scene that some scholars understand as necromantic is *Odyssey* 11.20 ff., where Odysseus digs a ditch at the border of the Underworld, pours libations to the dead, and then sacrifices sheep so that their blood drips into the pit. After the dead drink the blood, they can speak.

But this isn't really necromancy. Odysseus does perform a ritual that enables one of the dead to communicate information that Odysseus wouldn't otherwise have: after drinking blood, the ghost of Teiresias tells him what to expect at home and how to appease Poseidon (11.90-151). Yet Odysseus goes to the dead, they do not come to him, except insofar as they spontaneously approach the blood that he provides. Odysseus' trip, in fact, is properly understood as another variation of the heroic *katabaseis* known from the stories of Heracles and of Theseus and Pirithoos, for example.¹⁰ As in the story of Heracles, who went to Hades to steal Cerberus, or the story of Theseus and Pirithoos, who went there to kidnap Persephone, the tale of Odysseus'

⁷ Johnston, above n. 6, *passim* but esp. Chap. 3.

⁸ My definition sticks more closely to the ancient definition of the word and the Greek equivalents formed on the *nekuo*-root (as well as to most modern definitions), than does that of D. Ogden, the most recent scholar to treat ancient necromancy in depth (*Greek and Roman Necromancy* [Princeton 2001]). I discuss the problems I see in Ogden's definition of necromancy in detail at *BMCR* 2002.06.19 and *History of Religions* 43.1 (2003) 50-54; here, I will discuss only those passages from archaic and classical sources that generally are held by scholars to be potentially necromantic, or which late antique authors defined as necromantic.

⁹ Most recently, the existence of necromancy in archaic and classical Greece has been argued for by Ogden, above n. 8, and Chris Faraone in the first part of his contribution to this volume.

¹⁰ Heracles' *katabasis*: first mentioned at *Od.* 11.622-26. Theseus' *katabasis*: first mentioned in the *Minyas* fr. 1 and Hes. fr. 280 MW (cf. Paus. 9.31.5); see also *Od.* 11.630-31, which may allude to it, and discussion of further material in T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore 1993), 291-95.

journey is motivated by his need for something that can be found only there—the advice of Teiresias, who happens to be dead. Indeed, at the end of Book 11, the ghost of Heracles implicitly compares Odysseus' journey to his own when he asks whether Odysseus has descended for a similar reason. The comparison is accentuated by the ghost's comment that "no other labor could be so difficult" as a *katabasis*, and by his tacitly flattering remark that Hermes and Athena had helped him to accomplish his—Odysseus, by implied contrast, had found his way with the aid only of Circe's instructions.

The first ghost whom Odysseus meets is that of his companion Elpenor, who speaks to Odysseus without partaking of the blood (11.51-80). This is because Elpenor is still unburied and thus able to interact with the living spontaneously, just as Patroclus' ghost does in *Iliad* 23.69-92. Like Patroclus, Elpenor begs Odysseus for burial and, unlike Patroclus, he threatens Odysseus with *mênima theôn* (the anger of the gods) if he remains *ataphos*—without funeral rites. The interaction between Elpenor and Odysseus is the utter opposite of necromancy: Elpenor appears because he chooses to, not because Odysseus bids him to; he speaks because he wants to, not because of any ritual that Odysseus performs; and he conveys information that he wishes to convey, rather than something Odysseus wishes to learn, going so far as to threaten Odysseus. It is not the living person who controls the situation here, but the dead one. Similarly, the other souls with whom Odysseus converses later in Book 11 appear at the blood either spontaneously or, in a few cases, at the behest of Persephone, rather than at Odysseus' command. Ajax's ghost even refuses to interact with Odysseus (11.543-67), proving Odysseus a poor necromancer by the standard meaning of the term.

An Attic vase, a fragment of Aeschylus' lost *Pythagôgoi* and its Aristophanic parody suggest that in later periods, Odysseus' actions sometimes were presented in a way that brought them closer to necromancy. The vase, which is dated to about 440 BCE,¹¹ shows Odysseus facing Elpenor's ghost, which is rising from the ground. Two slain rams, blood pouring forth from slits in their throats, lie nearby, just as the *Odyssey* describes. But in contrast to the *Odyssey*, Hermes is present as well; he stands in back of Odysseus as if he is about to aid the hero. By the fifth century, Hermes had become well known as a

¹¹ Museum of Fine Arts, Boston inv. 34.79.

psychopompic god and particularly as one who could help the living invoke the dead for various purposes—he is often asked to rouse the dead on curse tablets, for example, and in the fragment of the *Psychagôgoi* he is asked to escort the dead up to the enquirers.¹² The addition of Hermes to the Odyssean scene shown on the vase, then, would seem to draw on this tradition and pull Odysseus' actions into the orbit of formalized rituals that called up the dead; the vase may even present a scene from the *Psychagôgoi* itself. Aristophanes' parody of the *Psychagôgoi* in his *Birds* of 414 BCE specifically describes Socrates as calling up souls (*psychagôgei*) on behalf of an enquirer named Pisander, and in the next breath says that, in order to make the rite work, Pisander cut the throat of a heifer “as Odysseus had,” which would seem to clinch the question: together, the vase and the two literary sources indicate that by the mid to late fifth-century, there were variations of Odysseus' story that fall into the category that we can properly call necromancy. Not that this means the practice of necromancy itself was common in fifth-century Greece; given the lack of any other support, it rather suggests that Odysseus' story had been embroidered with threads from an exotic custom of which the Greeks had become aware by this time.¹³ In later antiquity, too, authors wished to understand Odysseus as performing necromancy—but they also realized that the scene presented in the *Odyssey* did not quite fill the bill. Julius Africanus (second to third centuries CE), perhaps following Aristodemus of Nysa (first century BCE), preserves a long incantatory interpolation into *Odyssey* 11, which attempts to bring Odysseus' actions into line with what was perceived as proper necromancy. Eustathius, similarly, commented on the absence of an incantation and the difficulties this raised for understanding the scene in *Odyssey* 11 as necromantic.¹⁴

Mention of Aeschylus brings us to the *Persians* (472 BCE) which includes one of the few clearly necromantic scenes in Greek literature

¹² *TrGF*, fr. 273a; J. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York 1992), 12.

¹³ It is worth mentioning that there is a second vase that may portray a scene from the *Psychagôgoi*, from southern Italy and dated to the last quarter of the fifth century BCE (Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles 422). On it, Teiresias' face rises up from the ground near the pit of blood, as Odysseus and two companions look on. (Art historians like to follow Homer in identifying the two as Eurylochus and Perimedes.) We know that the *Psychagôgoi* concerned Odysseus' interview with Teiresias.

¹⁴ Julius Africanus, *Kestoi* 18 = *PGM* XXIII. Eust. ad. *Od.* 10.535. See also Max. Tyre 8.2, who wants to associate Odysseus with the *nekuomanteion* at Avernus.

(lines 598-842). But the utter foreignness of the necromantic act, which takes place in the Persian palace, is strongly emphasized by Aeschylus and so this scene, too, fails to provide any evidence for the practice of necromancy being common in classical Greece.¹⁵ That leaves one more major piece of literary evidence to consider: Herodotus' tale of the *nekuomanteion* in Thesprotian Ephyra, where Periander's men called up the ghost of Periander's wife, Melissa, in order to ask her whether she knew where he had left a missing object (Hdt. 5.92). Again, foreignness and uncanniness are keynotes of the scene, for the Ephyran *nekuomanteion* was located on the margins of the Greek world of the time, on the banks of a river called Acheron, near a reputed entrance to the Underworld.¹⁶ And yet, in spite of this uncanny location, communication between living and dead at this *nekuomanteion* is strikingly quotidian. The question posed to Melissa is no different from the sort of thing that a husband would ask his wife while she was still alive—even at this mysterious place, and even with the help of ritual specialists, the living could find out from the dead only what the dead knew while alive—nothing terribly arcane;¹⁷ even after the Greeks had adopted the idea of necromancy from other cultures they were slow to develop its possibilities even in fictionalizing narratives. Moreover, the encounter between Periander's men and Melissa's ghost was at least as profitable for Melissa as for Periander, for Melissa revealed the location of Periander's lost object only after Periander had performed further funerary rituals in her honor. This, like the case of Elpenor's ghost, aligns with the paradigm presented by the oracles concerning the dead given at Delphi: in Greece, information that passes from the dead to the living typically compels the living to ameliorate the conditions under which the dead exist at least as much, or more than, it serves any unrelated need of the living.

I will conclude this analysis of evidence for necromancy by considering the possible existence of real *nekuomanteia* in archaic and classical Greece, starting with the oracles of Trophonius and Amphiaraus.

¹⁵ I have discussed this in depth at Johnston, above n. 6, 116-18.

¹⁶ Homer picks up on these qualities when he tells us that Odysseus went to Ephyra to obtain a special man-killing poison for the tips of his arrows (*Od.* 1.259-62).

¹⁷ The *Odyssey* implies the same thing: the only ghost who truly prophesies in the sense of revealing the future is Teiresias, and he was a prophet already while he was alive. Some of the ghosts even ask Odysseus for information—Achilles wonders how his son is faring in the upper world, for instance (*Od.* 11.457-61).

Scholars have tended to call these *nekuomanteia* because Trophonius and Amphiaraus were once mortal men and seem to have personally appeared to enquirers who visited their shrines.¹⁸ But we must remember, first, that neither hero actually died (both were swallowed up by the ground while still alive) and second, that ancient sources refer to both Trophonius and Amphiaraus as gods, *theoi*. If we label their oracles *nekuomanteia*, then we'd have to call Epidaureus a *nekuomanteion* as well, for example, seeing as how the god Asclepius also was once a mortal man and also appeared to enquirers who, like those at the Amphiaraon, incubated in his sanctuary. This leaves what Ogden has called the "Big Four" *nekuomanteia* of antiquity: in Thesprotian Ephyra, in Heracleia Pontica, in Tainaron and at Lake Avernus at Cumae. But Ogden concedes, in spite of his detailed discussions of their possible existence, that "no ancient consultation of a *nekuomanteion* retains the appearance of historicity after scrutiny. Not even the most miserable piece of epigraphy can be associated with a *nekuomanteion*."¹⁹ Even if some of these *nekuomanteia* were real, functioning sites, they have not left such evidence as to persuade us that they wielded significant influence or attracted much of a clientele.

To sum up this part of my argument. First: "necromancy" was barely in its infancy in archaic and classical Greece; consultation of the dead was a literary *topos* only, rather than a real practice. The process was portrayed as foreign and marginal, belonging to the Persians or practiced at distant entrances to the Underworld—it was not something that Greeks normally did. Second: even in literature, when the living and the dead encountered one another the dead controlled the situation at least as much as the living did, often using the opportunity to make new demands on the living and sometimes threatening repercussions if the demands were not met. The Greeks, in other words, had trouble conceiving of contact with the dead as beneficial, except insofar as it provided additional information about when and how to avert their dangerous anger.

¹⁸ I am guilty of having made this error myself in an earlier publication, finished before I did the work on necromancy that I am presenting here (Johnston, above n. 6, 29 n.79). See also, e.g., Faraone's contribution to this volume; S. Eitrem, "The Necromancy in the *Persae* of Aeschylus," *SO* 6 (1928): 1-16; and F. Cumont, *Lux Perpetua* (Paris 1949), 86. Ogden, above n. 8, 24-25, rightly makes the distinction.

¹⁹ Ogden, above n. 8, esp. p. 22.

Delphic Apollo and the Dead

Notably, specialists who come into Greek cities to diagnose and address problems with the dead were frequently described as foreign and marginal as well: Athens called Epimenides in from Crete in order to appease the dead and their divine agents after the Cylonian Affair, for example, and the Spartans called their *psychagôgoi* in from either Thessaly or Italy.²⁰ Which brings us back to the Delphic Oracle. For even as these independent specialists retained their foreign stamp during the archaic and classical periods, they quickly were pulled into the Delphic orbit: it was supposedly at the order of the Delphic Oracle that Athens called in Epimenides, and it was again at the order of the Oracle that the Spartans called in *psychagôgoi* to lay Pausanias' ghost.²¹ From the start, experts in communication between living and dead—and thereby the communication itself—were placed firmly under the control of an oracular god whom the Greeks already trusted to clarify problems and ease difficult situations. Or in other words, and particularly when we remember that a high percentage of Delphic oracles concern the dead, we circle back to my earlier statement: the Greeks expected—the Greeks positively desired—Apollo to mediate communication between the living and the dead, both by himself and through the experts whom he sanctioned. Even after the Greeks had become aware of necromancy from Near Eastern cultures, they preferred that communication between the dead and the living carry the imprimatur of a familiar god.

It is possible that gods at institutional oracles other than Delphi mediated in this way as well, although our evidence for this is scarce: one of the consultation tickets excavated at Dodona, which asks Zeus whether it is right for the enquirers to hire a certain *psychagôgos* named Doreius, echoes Delphi's habit of recommending experts such as Epimenides and the *psychagôgoi* who saved Sparta when ghostly problems

²⁰ Epimenides: Plu. *Sol.* 12 and Jacoby's commentary ad *FGrH* 457 T 1-4; Johnston, above n. 6, 279-87. *Psychagôgoi*: Plu. *Mor.* fr. 126 (Sandbach) = Plu. *Homerikai meletai* fr. 1 (Bernadakis) = schol. Eur. *Alc.* 1128; Plu. *de Ser* 560e-f.

²¹ In addition to the sources given in the preceding note, see D.L. 1.110 (Epimenides). Other sources mention that the Spartans consulted Delphi to learn how to deal with their problem, but do not specify whether Delphi told them to hire *psychagôgoi*: Th. 1.134.4-135.1; D.S. 11.45; Nep. 4.5; Paus. 3.17.7-9; Themist. *Ep.* 5.15; Aristodem. *FGrH* 104 F 8.

arose. From Claros we have one oracle that recommends propitiating the dead along with various gods in order to end a plague and another one that recommends propitiating Underworld divinities (its fragmentary nature makes it possible that it might have involved propitiating the dead as well). We have a third that gives advice about a large coffin and correspondingly large corpse that had been found in a river bed—which, Apollo tells the inquirers, were those of the hero Orontes, eponym of the river. Although as we have it now, the oracle makes no recommendation about what to do with Orontes' corpse, it's possible that a fuller version would have been similar to our type 3 Delphic oracles.²²

Why the paucity of oracles concerning the dead from other institutions? The most obvious reason is that we have very little evidence for the oracles at these other sites; Merkelbach and Stauber could collect only 27 inscribed oracles issued by Claros, for example (and we have very few non-inscribed oracles), Fontenrose assembled only 50 oracles from Didyma—quite a few of which are late, “philosophizing” oracles on such issues as the nature of the soul, the identity of the Jewish god, and why other oracles have quit working, disinterred from sources such as Lactantius, Porphyry and Eusebius—and almost none of the Dodonian materials, which number more than 1400 individual consultation tickets, have yet been published. Our picture of these other institutionalized oracles might change considerably if we had more information. Nor do narrative sources help. Delphi was *the* pre-eminent oracle in antiquity, more prominent in the ancient mentality and therefore more often mentioned in the texts from which many of our Delphic oracles derive. In contrast, although Claros seems to have

²² D. Evangelidis, “Ἡπειρωτικά ἔρευνα· I. Ἡ ἀνασκαφὴ τῆς Δωδώνης (1935),” *Ἡπειρωτικά Χρονικά* 10 (1935): 193-260; see p. 257 (#23 of the epigraphai); and see also now A.-P. Christidis, S. Dakaris, and I. Vokotopoulou, “Magic in the Oracular Tablets from Dodona,” in *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the first international Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute in Athens 4-8 May 1997*, D.R. Jordan, H. Montgomery and E. Thomassen, eds. (Bergen 1999), 67-72. On Claros: see R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, “Die Orakel des Apollon von Klaros,” *Epigraphica Anatolica* 27 (1996): 1-54. The relevant oracles are (in Merkelbach and Stauber's numbering): #4, #9, #23. On #9, see also Zsuzsanna Várhelyi, “Magic, Religion and Syncretism at the Oracle of Claros,” in S. Asirvatham, C. Pache, and J. Watrous, eds., *Between Magic and Religion: Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society* (Lanham and New York 2001), 13-34. Didymeian oracles: given in an appendix to Fontenrose, as cited in n. 3.

been founded in the eighth century, Didyma at some time prior to the sixth, and Dodona early enough to be mentioned in the Homeric poems, they made relatively little dent in either history or myth until later periods: we have no Homeric hymns describing their foundations (indeed, the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* mentions Claros in a catalogue at line 40, only to pass it by), and no *Oresteiai* describing their intervention in legendary family problems. Didymus failed to pass Croesus' test and thus won no place for itself in the tale of that famous king, and Claros, despite its closeness to Croesus' home land, wasn't even asked to compete. Both Didyma and Claros lacked major athletic festivals; sacred wars were not fought over them. Until the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, they paled in comparison to Delphi. Geography may have had something to do with this—Delphi was more centrally located in the Greek world of the archaic and classical periods than the other oracles, and it was easier to get to—but specific reasons cannot (and needn't be) pursued here. My point is that, if I am correct in suggesting that the Greeks needed a god to assume the task of mediating between the living and the dead when this became a concern in the archaic age, we are likelier to find Delphic Apollo in this role than Clarian Apollo, Didymean Apollo or Dodonian Zeus simply because he was better known as a problem solver at this time.

But let us return to the larger question of why the Greeks put a god in this role at all. If we broaden our gaze a bit, we see the same desire to have gods mediate between the living and the dead behind the curse tablets, another phenomenon that developed in the late archaic age: those who wrote the tablets asked Hermes, Hecate and other gods to compel the dead to do what they should.²³ (It is interesting that when Aeschylus portrays Odysseus as consulting ghosts in the *Psychagôgoi*, Hermes is present to help ensure their cooperation and that when his Persian chorus calls up Dareius, it asks Hermes, Earth and Hades to send him up. It looks as if, when the Greek imagination began to take hold of necromancy, it associated it with gods who were already credited with sending up the dead for other reasons.) Similarly, Dionysus mediated between mortals and the powers of the Underworld in certain mystery cults—both before the mortals died and afterwards.²⁴ The frequent pairing of divine cult and heroic cult

²³ Johnston, above n. 6, 71-3.

²⁴ S.I. Johnston and T.J. McNiven, "Dionysos and the Underworld in Toledo," *Mus. Helv.* 53.1 (1996): 25-36.

within a single sanctuary speaks to the same idea: heroes are, after all, dead mortals, even if they are dead mortals of special note. The tendency to worship them in tandem with gods can be taken to indicate either or both of two things: that their worship was a relatively late development, secondary to divine worship (as other material suggests as well) and that the heroes initially had no “category” of their own; or that the Greeks wished to place the heroes safely under the control of the more powerful gods—a situation that is hinted at in myth, which often presents living heroes as the antagonists whom the gods must subjugate, and dead heroes as persistent threats whom mortals must appease, frequently at the same festivals during which gods are worshipped.²⁵ This brings us back to our Delphic oracles, in fact, for quite a few of them that recommend establishing cult to the dead simultaneously recommend establishing further cult or rituals in honor of a god, or recommend that the dead be appeased within the precinct of a divinity (see ## 3, 7, 8, 11, 16, 31, 35, 42, 43 and, with slight variations, ## 6 and 13).

All of this presents a picture of the ancient Greeks as being far more comfortable interacting with their gods, however unpredictable they might sometimes be, than with their dead—perhaps because they were afraid of the dead and all that surrounded them, perhaps because they felt they lacked the ability to control the dead themselves, perhaps because the dead were simply less familiar to them than the gods. This was not the case in all ancient Mediterranean cultures. Egyptians wrote letters directly to their dead relatives, asking for advice and even intervention in their daily affairs; the Mesopotamians, too, interacted with the dead much more freely than the Greeks.²⁶ If we look outside of the ancient Mediterranean, we find other examples that set the Greeks in even sharper contrast. Zulu religion, for example, places far greater emphasis on worshipping ancestors than its rather distant gods, and keeps the dead close to the dwelling places of the living, going so far as to call their spirits into the *umsamos* (ritual centers) of their homes. The Torajans of Indonesia keep their dead relatives in the house for months or even years, wrapped in layers of absorbent

²⁵ Thus, for instance, Erigone’s ghost is propitiated annually at the same time as Dionysus is celebrated at the Athenian Anthesteria (there are also traces of an earlier pairing of Erigone and Artemis): Johnston, above n. 6, chap. 6.

²⁶ For a summary of this topic, see Johnston, above n. 6, 86–95, and the references to individual treatments of each culture that are cited in the notes.

cloth to soak up putrefaction. They speak to the dead just as they did when they were alive, involving them in daily matters of the family, and offer them food and drink by balancing a plate on the body. Only when the family has the financial means and the desire to do the job properly—that is, with a festive party—do they complete the funerary rites, and even this fails to separate the worlds of the dead and the living in any significant way. These instances of maintaining close relationships with the dead, from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, from contemporary Africa and Indonesia, could be multiplied many times over, as Nigel Barley has demonstrated,²⁷ and they underscore what classicists have tended to overlook, both because their deep familiarity with ancient Greek culture makes Greek attitudes towards the dead seem “normal,” and because these same attitudes are considered “normal” in the western cultures in which most classicists grow up: namely, that the ancient Greeks sought to keep a greater distance between the living and the dead than many other peoples did or do. The dead were a considerable source of anxiety for them; their return, whatever the reason for it might be, was not welcome except during certain annual festivals that were carefully supervised.

And this, in turn, underscores an important characteristic of not only the Delphic Oracle but of divination in general. Divination, in all its variations, plays the role of a buffer. It stands between the world as humans experience it on an everyday basis, and other worlds that they can only imagine but which threaten to impinge upon their everyday world in deleterious ways: the world of the dead, the world of the gods, the world of the past and the world of the future—this last of which includes (perhaps worst of all) the worlds of alternative, competing choices, whose divergent ramifications cannot be seen until one irreversibly embarks upon them. Divination is not only (perhaps not even very frequently) a way of *solving* a particular problem in and of itself, but rather a way of *redirecting* the problem out of one of these other worlds, in which it seems to be rooted, and into the everyday world, where one is better able to solve it with human skills.

The specific ways in which divination does this vary not only from culture to culture, but from method to method and even from occa-

²⁷ Zulu: E.T. Lawson, *Religions of Africa: Traditions in Transformation* (San Francisco 1984), 12-49. Torajans and many other examples: Nigel Barley, *Dancing on the Grave: Encounters with Death* (London 1995).

sion to occasion; here I can sketch just three examples by way of demonstration. Robert Parker, in his study of the “Wooden Walls” oracle, has explored the manner in which Delphi could redirect the focus of a problem towards issues with which human knowledge and abilities could cope.²⁸ Once the Athenians had been assured by Delphi that they could survive a Persian attack (that is, once they no longer faced the question of whether they should or should not join forces with their fellow Greeks, and the future, in general terms, thereby was settled), they could turn instead towards debating how best to meet the requirements that the Oracle had decreed were necessary for their survival—namely, towards interpreting what “Wooden Walls” meant, just the sort of task at which Athenian civic discourse excelled.²⁹ Some types of sortition, such as that practiced at the cult of Fortuna in Praeneste or that used in the dice oracles discussed by Fritz Graf in this volume, offered the enquirer a single poetic verse. Even if the verse had no immediate connection to his inquiry, it was clearly either positive, promising success, or negative, warning against losses; thereby it lessened the enquirer’s anxiety either by limiting the scope of possible outcomes (“you will succeed”) or by preventing him from making a move about which he was unsure (“you are in danger if you proceed”). And indeed, if the enquirer (or a specialist to whom he turned for help) chose to interpret the verse to fit the situation about which he enquired more closely, all the better: by analogizing the problem, by compelling the enquirer to compare his business worries to a “sickness that would be cured,” or a “dog that has given birth to a blind litter” (to take examples from the dice oracles) the verse might also compel him to examine aspects of the problem that he had previously ignored, leading him to see it, and his options, in new light. We are all familiar with the way that horoscopes in the morning newspaper do this as well.³⁰

²⁸ For more on the “Wooden Wall” episode, see Dillery in this volume, 210-19.

²⁹ R. Parker, “Greek States and Greek Oracles,” in P.A. Cartledge and F.D. Harvey, eds., *Crux: Essays Presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix on his 75th Birthday, History of Political Thought*, 6.1/2 (1985): 298-326 (rpt. in R. Buxton, ed., *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* [Oxford 2000], 76-108). Cf. S.I. Johnston, “From Oracles, What Useful Words Have Ever Come to Mortals?” Delphic Apollo in the *Oresteia*,” forthcoming in the proceedings of a conference titled “Apolline Politics and Poetics,” held in Delphi in July 2003.

³⁰ Cf. also Yoruba divination, as described by Lawson, above n. 27, 67-69.

A final example: all forms of divination involve some sort of “randomizing” element (shuffling cards, swirling tea-leaves, shaking dice, ensuring that a medium is in trance). On the one hand, and particularly as we view the matter from our standpoint of modern rationality, this element ensures that the enquirer or his agent has not consciously or unconsciously manipulated the materials that are to be read. On the other hand, particularly as viewed from the standpoint of the participants who trust the method, the randomizing element gives the god, fate, or whatever other entity is expected to send the message an opportunity to intervene by manipulating the materials (arranging the cards in the correct order, turning the correct sides of the dice up, speaking through the medium’s voice). In other words, what we would call randomization is understood by participants to build a bridge between our world and the other world. We can go even further with this: many forms of divination also include some form of “derandomization,” that is, of clarifying or interpreting the message once it has been delivered. This is the final stage, we might say, of moving the problem and its solution from the other world into the everyday world, of bridging the gap between the two.³¹ But here again, what moving from one world into the other one really amounts to is focusing and “translating” the answer into a form that the enquirer can understand and make use of with his own intelligence or skills. Tea leaves are no longer enigmatic swirls that a medium tells us were guided by the hand of fate, but a semiotic system that she has persuaded us she can interpret and apply to our situation. Divination has once again crossed the boundary between our world and another one (the world of “fate”? the world of the future?) and returned with information that, by limiting the bewildering array of potential futures,

³¹ Randomizing and the Delphic Oracle: L. Maurizio, “Anthropology and Spirit Possession: A Reconsideration of the Pythia’s Role at Delphi,” *JHS* 115 (1995): 69-86 (following on Emily Ahern, who first developed the concept of randomization in her study of Chinese divination: *Chinese Ritual and Politics* [Cambridge 1981]). Randomizing and derandomizing in ancient divination: S.I. Johnston, “Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination,” *Arethusa* 34.1 (2001): 97-118 and cf. the remarks of Graf in this volume, p. 61-62. On the tension between randomness (as we understand it in the modern sense) and the assumption that fate or a god guides divinatory materials, S.I. Johnston “Lost in the Shuffle: Roman Sortition and its Discontents,” *ARG* 5.1 (2003): 146-56. (I am grateful to my co-editor Peter Struck for fruitful discussion of these issues as I prepared the final version of my paper.)

however vaguely (“you will meet a tall, dark stranger,” “you will make a voyage”), lessens our anxiety.

Like so many other phenomena that we group under the rubric of “religion,” then, divination is valuable because it provides a feeling of control within chaotic circumstances (I am not far, here, from one of the conclusions that Walter Burkert reached in his essay in this volume; as he put it, divination is an attempt to extend the realm of *ratio* into misty zones from which normal knowledge and experience is absent.³²) But how do our oracles concerning the dead accomplish this? Two points are important. First, forms of divination that are explicitly mediated by a god, such as at Delphi, reassure enquirers by the very fact that a god intervenes. This reiterates a point made just above: as much as the gods belonged to another world themselves, that world was more familiar to the Greeks than the world of the dead. Reassurance also derives from the fact that the god is stronger not only than the enquirer but also than the dead—the situation is analogous to praying to gods to avert demonic ills insofar as, if one wins the favor of a god, one needn’t fear the demon. Granted, in the case of aversion the demons are dispensed and in the case of divination the dead express their needs, but in both cases, a threat to human welfare is obviated by a god’s intervention.

But second, these oracles tend to move problematic matters not only out of the world of the dead into the world of the living, but also out of the world of the past or the world of the future into the world of the present. Thus, some of the oracles reveal past injustices that have caused the dead to be angry: although these injustices cannot be erased (the past cannot be changed), restitution can be accomplished by the establishment of cult (by actions that can be performed in the present). Others reveal the ramifications of an action that has not yet been taken but that might be. That is, they reveal the future, or rather two alternative futures (“bury Oedipus in Thebes and his ghost will help you; bury him elsewhere and he will be a bane to Thebans,” #41), and leave it to the living to make their choice and proceed as needed. These oracles promise the living that by acting in the present they can, in fact, affect the future.

³² Compare also many of the remarks of Jean-Pierre Vernant in his essay “Parole et signes muets,” in Vernant et. al., *Divination et Rationalité* (Paris 1974), translated as “Speech and Mute Signs” in *Mortals and Immortals* (Princeton 1991).

But either way—whether an oracle delves into the past or into the future—it moves not only information but also *options for action* into the world of the enquirers. It extends the range of their agency; it puts new reins into their hands. And that, in the final analysis, is what all divination is about.

Appendix of Oracles Concerning the Dead

PW # = as listed in H.W. Parke and D.E.W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle II: The Oracular Responses* (Oxford 1956); letter plus # = as listed in J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations with a Catalogue of Responses* (Berkeley 1978); H = Historical, Q = Quasi-historical and L = Legendary. The letter “g” after a “Q” oracle indicates that Fontenrose judged it genuine or probably genuine; “ng” means that he judged it unlikely to be genuine. Absence of either “g” or “ng” means that he gave no opinion.

I have listed the oracles within their categories in the order in which they are given in volume II of Parke and Wormell.

Dates given in parentheses are those assigned by Fontenrose and should be regarded in many cases as only approximate; in the case of legendary or quasi-historical oracles, the date corresponds to that which ancient sources gave it or to the date of the earliest source for the oracle. For complete details on the textual history of each oracle, see Fontenrose.

Appeasing the Murdered Dead

- 1) Telling Corax, the killer of Archilochus, to appease his soul with libations: PW 4-5; Q58ng (ca. 640 BCE).
- 2) Telling the Athenians to end a plague by cleansing their city after the slaughter of suppliants in the Cylonian affair: PW 13; Q65g (596 BCE).
- 3) Telling the tyrant Pythagoras to end a plague in Ephesus by erecting a temple [probably to Artemis; see Fontenrose p. 76] and burying a girl whom he caused to hang herself: PW 27; Q82ng (ca. 560 BCE).
- 4) Telling the Delphians to propitiate the ghost of Aesop in order to end a plague: PW 58; Q107ng (ca. 550 BCE).
- 5) Telling the Agylaiioi to end sickness among men and beasts by appeasing the Phocaeans whom they had murdered and establishing

games in their honor: PW 64; Q113ng (535-530 BCE).

6) Telling the Sybarites that a fountain of blood in their temple to Hera reflects their murder of a suppliant at her altar: PW 74; Q123ng (515-10 BCE).

7) Telling the Crotoniates, Sybarites and Metapontines that to end pestilence and civil strife, they must placate Athena and the ghosts of fifty boys whom they murdered in her temple: PW 75; Q126ng (ca. 530 BCE).

8) Telling the Spartans that to end a plague, they must appease Pausanias' ghost by burying his body and setting up two statues of him in Athena's sanctuary: PW 114; Q174ng (after 476 BCE).

9) Telling the Achaeans to set up a statue of (the dead) athlete Oibatas at Olympia in order to end a losing streak at the games: PW 118; Q169g (460 BCE).

10) Telling Orestes to kill his mother in order to appease his father's ghost: PW139; L7.

11) Telling the Corinthians to end a plague (or epidemic of infant deaths) by appeasing the wrath of Medea's murdered sons by burying them in Hera's *temenos*: PW199; L35.

12) Telling Alcmaeon that he will be released from his mother's Erinyes when he finds a land that did not exist when he killed her: PW202; L40.

13) Telling King Temenos of the Heraklids that he can end a plague that was brought on by the murder of Karnos by establishing cult to Apollo Karneios: PW291-92; L64.

14) Telling King Temenos of the Heraklids to end a famine by exiling the murderer of a seer: PW293; L65 (this oracle is related to the preceding oracle; see discussions in PW and F).

15) Telling the Pierians that they can end a plague by finding the head of Orpheus (whom they murdered) and burying it: PW376; L88.

16) Telling the Caphyians to end a plague of miscarriages by burying the children whom they had wrongly stoned to death and sacrificing to them every year; they should also worship Artemis Apanchomene: PW385; L91.

17) Telling the Argives to end a plague by appeasing the ghosts of Psamathe and Linus, whom they had killed: PW386; L92.

18) Telling the Locrians to honor (the previously unhonored) Euthycles as a hero in order to end a famine: PW388; Q168ng (before 500 BCE?).

19) Telling the Thasians to honor the dishonored hero Theagenes:

PW389; Q170ng (ca. 450 BCE).

20) Telling the inhabitants of Temesa to appease the ghost of Polites by establishing a *temenos* for him and offering him a beautiful maiden every year: PW392; L156.

21) Telling Heracles how to cure the illness that beset him after his murder of his children (or, alternatively, his murder of Iphitus): PW445; L109.

22) Telling the Athenians to end a plague of maiden suicides by establishing sacrifices to Erigone, Icarius and Maira, all of whom had died because of the Athenians; also, to appease Erigone's ghost by hanging the effigy of a woman: PW542-43; L133.

23) Telling the Athenians to end the barrenness of their land by making annual libations to Aetolians whom they had wrongly killed and to establish the feast of the Choes: PW544; L148.

24) Telling the Orchomenians to appease Actaeon's ghost and thus end its ravages by burying Actaeon's remains, making a bronze image of him and attaching it to a rock with chains: PW564; L138.

25) Telling the Tegeans to end a crop failure by mourning Scephros: PW566; L154.

26) Telling the king of Delphi to end a famine and plague by appeasing the ghost of Charila, who had committed suicide: PW 570; L140.

27) Telling Orestes that he will escape from his mother's Erinyes by seeking trial in Athens: PW602; L8.

28) Telling the Athenians to end drought and crop failure by punishing the murderer of an ox and "restoring" the ox to life (*aition* for the Buphonia): PW559; L136.

Establishing Cult to the Dead (without any Indication of Previous Anger on the Part of the Dead)

29) Telling the Astypalaeans to honor Cleomedes as a hero: PW88; Q166ng (496 BCE).

30) Telling the Athenians to honor Echetaios as a hero after they saw his ghost fighting at Marathon: PW90; Q142g (490 BCE).

31) Telling the Metapontines to found an altar for Apollo and by its side establish a statue of Aristas (following the appearance of his ghost): PW116; Q165ng (550-500 BCE).

32) Telling the Locrians to begin sacrificing to the (dead) Olympic victor Euthymos as a hero: PW117; Q167g (ca. 470 BCE).

33) Telling the Athenians to sacrifice to the “chiefs of the land, the resident heroes whom Salamis covers, who in death face sunset” in order to win the war with Megara: PW326; Q69g (570 BCE).

34) Telling the Therans to establish cult to Artemidorus as an immortal hero: PW 336, H37 (ca. 250 BCE).

35) Telling the Delphians to establish cult to Pindar after his death by offering him a share of all firstlings brought to Apollo: PW119; Q178g (ca. 442-440).

Regarding Proper Burial

36) Telling Cleisthenes not to cast the remains of Adrastus out of Sicyon: PW 24; Q74ng (ca. 580 BCE).

37) Telling the Spartans to recover Orestes’ bones: PW 32; Q89ng (ca. 550 BCE).

38) Telling the Spartans where to recover the bones of Orestes: PW 33; Q90ng (ca. 550 BCE).

39) Telling the Spartans to bring the body of Tisamenos home from Helike: PW 34; Q91ng (550-500 BCE?).

40) Telling the Athenians to recover and bury Theseus’ bones: PW 113; Q164ng (476/5 BCE).

41) Telling the Thebans that Oedipus’ ghost will protect the city in which his body is buried and will be a bane to them if he is buried elsewhere: PW153; L21.

42) Telling Eurystheus that his tomb will be in Athens in front of Athena’s temple, where he will act as Athens’ friend and as enemy to the Herakleidai when they attack: PW183; L24.

43) Telling the Delphians to bury the murdered Neoptolemus in Apollo’s *temenos*: PW188; L26.

44) Telling the Orchomenians that they can end a plague by bringing Hesiod’s bones home from Naupactus: PW207; L42.

45) Telling the Messenians to bring the bones of Aristomenes from Rhodes to Ithmone: PW 369; Q22g (fourth century BCE or later).

46) Telling the Thebans to end a famine by acquiring the bones of Hector and worshipping him as a hero: PW409; L101.

47) Telling the Heraklids to bury Alcmene in Megara instead of Thebes: PW562; L137.

48) Telling the Eleians to end a plague by recovering Pelops’ bones: PW563; L153.

- 49) Telling the Tarentines to scatter Phalanthos' bones and ashes in the marketplace for the good of the country: PW 526; Q38ng (ca. seventh century BCE).
- 50) Telling the inhabitants of Herakleia-on-Pontos to deliver themselves from famine by crowning Herakleides while he lives and honoring him as a hero after he dies: PW419; Q223ng (310 BCE).
- 51) Telling the Tarentines to bury the dead within their city walls: PW 568; Q37ng (ca. 700 BCE).
- 52) Telling Pelias to bring home Phrixus' ghost by bringing home the Golden Fleece: PW144; L13. N.B.: although no explicit mention is made of Phrixus' remains, our source for the oracle (Pi. P. 4.158-64) says that Phrixus' ghost told Pelias in a dream that the anger of the chthonic powers (*chthonioi*) could be appeased and his own soul (*psychê*) brought home if the Golden Fleece were brought home. The Golden Fleece—a numinous object connected closely with Phrixus—here takes the usual place of bones or other remains.

Other

- 53) Approving the Cyrenean purification laws (which include statements about appeasing the dead): PW 280; H26 (ca. 325 BCE).
- 54) Telling the Athenians that a portent that appeared in the sky indicates that they should sacrifice to various gods and a hero, and make the customary sacrifices to the dead on the proper days: PW 283; H29 (before 340 BCE).

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